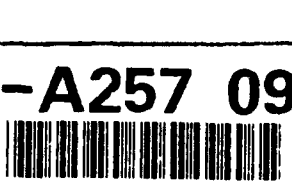
AD-A257 096



TION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)	2. REPORT DATE	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED
	5 Jun 92	1 Aug 91- 5 Jun 92

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE
Was the Soviet Union Responsible for the Outbreak of the Korean War?

5. FUNDING NUMBERS

6. AUTHOR(S)
CPT(P) Anthony R. Garrett

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)
U.S. Army Command and General Staff College
Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027

8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER

9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)

10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER

11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

12a. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Approved for public release; distribution unlimited.

12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE

13. ABSTRACT *(Maximum 200 words)*

This study analyzes the role of the Soviet Union in the outbreak of the Korean War from an atypical perspective. Rather than reexamine the limited information with the result being a recapitulation of the facts, the analysis will focus on the influence of the Cold War in shaping the Western claim that the Soviet Union was responsible for the North Korean invasion. In this context, the study will: review and examine the Great Power conferences of World War II as they relate to Korea; analyze Soviet-American relations in Korea and postwar Europe (with emphasis on Iran, Greece, Turkey, and Berlin); assess the influence of ideologies on foreign policy; examine the Sino-North Korean relationship; consider Soviet motivations for instigating the war; and finally, discuss the role of personalities in shaping perceptions.

The study concludes with the proposition that the Western claim that the Soviet Union was responsible instigating the Korean War is based on historical misperceptions, Cold War ideologies, and personalities rather than empirical evidence of Soviet complicity.

14. SUBJECT TERMS	15. NUMBER OF PAGES
Korean War, Soviet Union, Korea, Cold War	97
	16. PRICE CODE

17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT
U	U	U	None

WAS THE SOVIET UNION RESPONSIBLE FOR THE OUTBREAK OF THE KOREAN WAR?

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

ANTHONY R. GARRETT, CPT(P), USA
B.A., Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
1992

WAS THE SOVIET UNION RESPONSIBLE FOR THE OUTBREAK OF THE KOREAN WAR?

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

ANTHONY R. GARRETT, CPT(P), USA
B.A., Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
1992

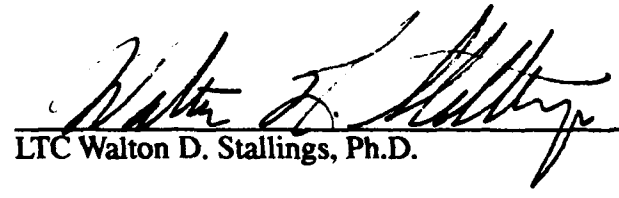
MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

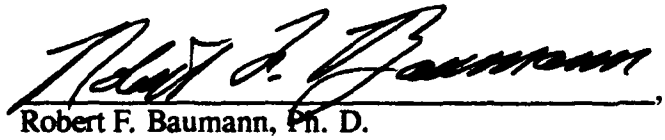
Name of candidate: CPT(P) Anthony R. Garrett

Title of Thesis: Was the Soviet Union Responsible for the Outbreak of the Korean War?

Approved by:



LTC Walton D. Stallings, Ph.D., Thesis Committee Chairman



Robert F. Baumann, Ph. D., Member

Accepted this 5th day of June 1992 by:

Philip J. Brookes, Ph.D., Director, Graduate Degree Programs

The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other government agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement).

ABSTRACT

WAS THE SOVIET UNION RESPONSIBLE FOR THE OUTBREAK OF THE KOREAN WAR? by CPT(P) Anthony R. Garrett, USA, 90 pages.

"In Korea the Russians presented a check which was drawn on the bank account of collective security. The Russians thought the check would bounce. . . . But to their great surprise, the teller paid it."[1] These remarks, made by Secretary of State Dean Acheson in late June 1950, reflected the prevailing opinion held throughout the free world– that the invasion of South Korea was due to Soviet-inspired expansionism.

Conventional wisdom has suggested that the origins of the Korean War were an integral part of the Cold War. This belief places responsibility for the war with the wishes of Moscow, Peking, and Pyongyang, with the dominant role originating in Moscow. Related to this theory is the belief that Washington was "reacting" to the actions of its superpower opponent– the Soviet Union. To the contrary, Washington was not reacting, but executing an anticommunist foreign policy that the communist nations viewed as threatening.

This study analyzes the role of the Soviet Union in the outbreak of the Korean War from an atypical perspective. Rather than reexamine the limited information with the result being a recapitulation of the facts, the analysis will focus on the influence of the Cold War in shaping the Western claim that the Soviet Union was responsible for the North Korean invasion. In this context, the study will: review and examine the Great Powers conferences of World War II as they relate to Korea; analyze Soviet-American relations in Korea and postwar Europe (with emphasis on Iran, Greece, Turkey, and the Berlin crisis); assess the influence of ideologies on foreign policy; examine the Sino-North Korean relationship; consider Soviet motivations for instigating the war; and finally, discuss the role of personalities in shaping perceptions.

The study concludes with the proposition that the Western claim that the Soviet Union was responsible for the Korean War is based on historical misperceptions, Cold War ideologies, and personalities rather than empirical evidence of Soviet complicity.

[1] Walter LaFeber, America, Russia, and the Cold War 1945-1980. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1980), 106.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many individuals and several institutions have assisted and encouraged me in this project. Paul Kozar of the Graduate School, Georgetown University provided the stimulus for this work through his dynamic instruction on Soviet foreign policy. He also provided advice and encouragement while it was being written. I should like to express my appreciation to Lieutenant Colonel Walton D. Stallings and Professor Robert F. Baumann of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College for reading, editing, guiding, and commenting on the numerous drafts. It has been personally and professionally rewarding to work with them.

The staff of the Combined Arms Research Library (CARL) of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College responded patiently and promptly to requests for information, copying, and interlibrary loans. Philip Lagerquist of the Harry S. Truman Library was instrumental in facilitating my research of the primary sources for this work. His suggestions, guidance, and prompt response to requests for information were of immeasurable importance. I would also like to thank the staff of the Lauinger Library of Georgetown University for their assistance in providing government documents and publications of the period. The availability of these documents was critical to developing my hypothesis.

My children, Erika, Christian, Ingrid, and Kristin, cooperated (most of the time) by refraining from entering my work area and disturbing the materials. Finally, my wife, Kathryn, calmly and patiently tolerated my irascibility, tantrums, and moodiness throughout this project. Without her support, sacrifice and encouragement, I would not have completed this work. This document is dedicated to her– thank you dear.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"In Korea the Russians presented a check which was drawn on the bank account of collective security. The Russians thought the check would bounce. . . . But to their great surprise, the teller paid it."[1] These remarks, made by Secretary of State Dean Acheson in late June 1950, reflected the prevailing opinion held throughout the free world– that the invasion of South Korea was a Soviet-inspired conspiracy.

Although there is extensive work on virtually every aspect of the war, the exact role of Moscow in the outbreak of hostilities remains a mystery. To many spectators in the West, as evidenced by Mr. Acheson's remarks, it seemed a certainty that the Soviet Union knew of the attack and granted North Korea permission to invade South Korea. In the absence of evidence, scholars have offered divergent opinions. To Adam Ulam, a noted scholar on the Soviet Union, it is "inconceivable" that the North Koreans "moved on their own," while to others it seems both conceivable and likely.[2] On one hand, it is understandable that historians have based their interpretations on limited facts, indirect sources, educated guesses. This is the normal course of scholarly analysis. However, Stephen Cohen suggests that Western studies of the Soviet Union and the Korean War seem to be based on an axiomatic set of interrelated interpretations to explain Soviet actions. The result of such an approach has been labels, images, and metaphors in the place of the real explanation.[3] During the Cold War, ideological passion and political events exacerbated this practice thereby further distorting the explanation for the Soviet Union's role in the Korean

---

[1] Walter LaFeber, America, Russia, and the Cold War 1945-1980. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1980), 106.

[2] William Stueck, "The Soviet Union and the Origins of the Korean War." World Politics vol. XXVIII (October 1975-July 1976): 622.

[3] Stephen F. Cohen, Rethinking the Soviet Experience, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 4-6.

War.

Two principal theories have emerged that represent the schools of thought on this topic. First, there is the traditionalist view of "Soviet Responsibility," that assumes the Soviet Union planned and orchestrated the North Korean attack. In contrast, there is the revisionist theory known as the "Kim Il Sung" hypothesis that claims the North Korean leader was responsible for the invasion.[4] Both theories take an eclectic approach. Proponents have adopted the other's views on specific events when it would lend support to their position.[5] Rather than answer the fundamental question, this approach has produced a deluge of contradictory interpretations.

Now that the war has receded into history and the anticommunist hysteria of the 1950s has lapsed, we are less compulsive about our beliefs concerning Communists and communism. Conventional wisdom has suggested that the origins of the Korean War were an integral part of the Cold War. This belief places responsibility for the war with the wishes of Moscow, Peking, and Pyongyang, with Moscow exercising control and influence over its two surrogates. Accordingly, the focus of numerous studies has been outside the Korean peninsula. Related to this theory is the belief that Washington was "reacting" to the actions of its superpower opponent– the Soviet Union. To the contrary, Washington was not reacting, but executing an anticommunist foreign policy that the communist nations viewed as threatening. Finally, other theorists argue that the origins of the Korean War have a civil nature. In their opinion, the intense nationalistic goals of both halves of Korea suggest the proper focus of any study should be the Korean Civil War.[6]

Because of the lack of information regarding the principal participants, this thesis is not a definitive work. Until the archives of Moscow, Pyongyang, and Peking are open to the public, we are not likely to determine the exact role of the Soviet Union in the war. For this reason, this work will present the hypothesis that the Western claim that the Soviet

---

[4] Robert Swartout, Jr. "American Historians and the Outbreak of the Korean War: An Historiographical Essay." Asian Quarterly (1979/1): 65-66.

[5] Ibid., 66.

[6] Robert R. Simmons, The Strained Alliance: Peking, Pyongyang, Moscow and the Politics of the Korean Civil War. (New York: The Free Press, 1975), xv-xvi.

Union was responsible for the outbreak of the Korean War is a product of historical misperceptions, Cold War ideologies, and personalities. In this study, I define "responsible" as meaning that the Soviet Union conceived of the invasion, initiated the planning, and directed North Korea to execute the plan. I believe it is worthwhile to revisit the issue from this perspective in an attempt to determine the validity of assigning blame to the Soviet Union for the outbreak of the Korean War. The focus of the study is whether Western allies had sufficient evidence to make this claim or their interpretation of events was due to the distortion of Cold War rhetoric.

The major primary and secondary sources used in this work include a combination of fact and opinion. The materials include: memoirs of Soviet and American officials; CIA intelligence reports; correspondence between government officials; State Department case studies; an interview with a former North Korean official; interviews with Joseph Stalin; previously undisclosed documents from Peking, and various works by noted Korean scholars. In all cases, I have included only information that appears accurate and consistent based on comparison of verified sources.

Because the foundation of this hypothesis relates to diplomacy and foreign policy, Chapter II reviews the Great Power conferences of World War II. It was at Cairo, Yalta, and Potsdam that the Allies shaped the future of a postwar Korea. This survey reveals that national interests determined the fate of Korea rather than the desire for a new world order.

Building on this history, Chapter III traces the significant events in Korea from 1945 to the outbreak of the war on June 25, 1950. The focus is on the roles and actions of the United States and Soviet Union as they attempted to establish friendly regimes in their sphere-of-influence. The analysis of these events reveals that American foreign policy towards Korea continued to vacillate between considering the peninsula a strategic interest and viewing Korea as outside our interests. The evidence reveals that the Truman Administration began to react to "perceived" communist threats. In sharp contrast, the Soviet Union maintained a consistent policy of supporting North Korea.

Chapter IV examines the Cold War in Europe. In Iran (1946), Greece and Turkey (1947), and Berlin (1948) the West, specifically the United States, confronted the Soviet

Union on the basis of ideology. The reader should not overlook the significance of these events in shaping the Western opinion of Soviet complicity in the outbreak of the Korean War. It was the American perception of communist aggression in Europe that precipitated the declaration of the Truman Doctrine, the publication of NSC-68, and the hysteria of McCarthyism. Cumulatively, these events led the West to believe that Moscow had instigated the Korean War.

Chapter V analyzes the theory that North Korea was a Soviet satellite subject to Moscow's direction. Conventional arguments claim that Kim Il Sung was a devoted follower of Stalin and that the invasion of the South was in response to Stalin's directives. This chapter is the most speculative of the work. It discusses the goals of Stalin and Kim Il Sung concerning Korea. The focus is on Kim's nationalistic goal of reunification as justification for the war. The analysis of Stalin will attempt to determine what the Soviet Union would have gained or lost by instigating the war. Central to this discussion is Stalin's practice of subordinating ideology to national security interests. Since nations seldom go to war or support another nation in a war without national goals, answering these questions may provide insight into possible motivations for the Soviet Union to instigate the invasion.

Finally, Chapter VI draws conclusions from the evidence that supports the hypothesis that the Western view of the Soviet Union's role in the outbreak of the Korean War is based on historical misperceptions, Cold War ideologies, and personalities rather than empirical evidence that reveals Soviet complicity and responsibility for the Korean War.

CHAPTER II

THE TRUSTEESHIP CONCEPT– DETERMINING KOREA'S FUTURE

Until the closing stages of World War II, Korea received scant attention from American planners. The future of Korea as a postwar colony received greater attention, however, as Japan's defeat became more obvious. For America the problem was how to reconcile former colonies with their old masters in such a way as to encourage the independence and self-determination of colonized peoples. One vision that appeared in 1943 and became one of the pillars of international policy towards Korea was the desire to create a multinational trusteeship.[1]

Theoretically, the trusteeship concept would provide the framework for postcolonial nations to make the transition to independence. During this period, the great powers would hold the colonies in trust until they were capable of handling their own affairs. Although the multinational trusteeship would replace unilateral colonial rule, the interests of the great powers remained the same albeit more subtle– to maintain access to the former colonies.[2]

The impetus for the trusteeship concept was unmistakably FDR and his vision of the new world order. Possessing a sophisticated and astute understanding of the postwar international climate, Roosevelt anticipated that the world would not tolerate acquisition and annexation; he hoped it would accept access. He hoped to do for colonial peoples what they could not do for themselves. In return, the postcolonial nations would not align themselves against the United States and its interests. This concept was not new; it is the heart of liberalism and as old as the United States. What was significant about FDR's trusteeship idea was that he presided over the world's most powerful country at a time when he could im-

[1] Bruce Cumings, The Origins of the Korean War, vol. 1. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 102.

[2] Ibid., 103.

plement his vision.[3]

The idea of a postwar trusteeship for Korea or any other colony ran aground the first time Roosevelt proposed the concept in an international forum. The British and French were not receptive to the implications of this idea vis-a-vis their colonial holdings. This was a volatile issue since the British and French intended on returning to their territories and resuming business as usual. Winston Churchill, epitomizing the pride of the British Empire, wanted to reverse the effects of the humiliating defeat at Singapore in 1942 thereby regaining a lost colony. Accordingly, he was not willing to accept Roosevelt's advice on the postwar relationship between Britain and her possessions.[4]

The Americans viewed Allied opposition to the trusteeship concept as a reflection of parochial national interests, whereas the Allies, especially the British, interpreted the proposal as an attempt to further American interests. Anthony Eden expressed the British view: "[Roosevelt] hoped that former colonial territories, once free of their masters, would become politically and economically dependent upon the United States and had no fear that others might fill that role."[5]

Allied opposition to the Korean trusteeship, evident as early as the Spring of 1943, did not discourage the American proponents. Instead, American planners in the State Department continued to develop the idea. Consequently, by November 1943, FDR felt confident that he could formally table the idea and obtain the reluctant concurrence of the Allies.[6]

The Cairo Conference– The Great Powers Proclaim Korean Independence

At the Cairo Conference of November 1943, the three participants, the United States, Great Britain, and China, represented by Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, issued the following proclamation addressing Korean postwar independence: "The aforesaid three great powers, mindful of the enslavement of the people of Korea, are determined that in

---

[3] Ibid.

[4] Peter Lowe, The Origins of the Korean War. (New York: Longman, Inc., 1986), 10.

[5] Bruce Cumings, The Origins of the Korean War, vol. 1. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 105.

[6] Ibid.

due course Korea shall become free and independent."[7]

The results of the Cairo Conference reflected Roosevelt's grand design for the new world order. In his view, China was a key factor in shaping a favorable postwar Asia, that is, an Asia that was inclined to support America in an international forum. Accordingly, Roosevelt intended to establish China's status as one of the Big Four powers and thereby codify the Korean trusteeship. A strong and stable China would fill the vacuum in Asia left by a defeated Japan. A strong China would likely reassert its paternal interest in a postwar Korea. Conversely, a weak and ineffective China would be unable to exert any influence in Korea thus leaving the peninsula the focus of power politics. By advocating China's incorporation into the great power circle, Roosevelt could move closer to achieving his vision of postwar Asia while simultaneously making China beholden to the United States. America could use this sense of obligation to counter Chinese encroachment in Korea. Also, America could benefit from this later consideration especially in postwar disputes such as those likely to arise in the multinational trusteeship.[8]

Roosevelt had several reasons for wanting to reach agreement on the Korean problem. First, he sincerely believed that Korea needed to progress to independence, a period that might span forty years. He based this opinion on America's experience with the Philippines.[9] Second, Roosevelt feared that a single nation occupation of Korea would lead to a similar kind of great power rivalry that resulted in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904. In this instance, the obvious region for expansion for both Russia and Japan was the territory of the ever-weakening Chinese Empire. Japanese nationalists viewed Korea as a foothold to further expansion into the China and warned that if Korea fell into another sphere of influence it would become "a dagger pointed at Japan's heart." For Russia, Manchuria, Korea, and perhaps Mongolia were the primary interest. All three shared borders with Russia, and the declining power of the Chinese Empire made them attractive targets. It was this competition between Russia and Japan to establish themselves in Korea

[7] Ibid., 106.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid., 108.

and Manchuria that led to the Russo-Japanese War.[10] Drawing on the past and experiences of the 1930s, he wanted to avoid the same mistakes by minimizing the opportunities for aggrandizement by interlopers. Third, for all the rhetoric about postwar American-Soviet cooperation, Roosevelt recognized that Soviet occupation of Korea would enhance Moscow's position in Northeast Asia at the expense of America since Japan could no longer function as a counterweight. Finally, the United States had no interest in assuming the responsibilities of a single trustee in Korea.[11]

What Roosevelt failed to realize or acknowledge was that the temperament of the colonial peoples, especially in Asia, had changed. The Korean people had been patient for almost thirty-five years as they endured unimaginable atrocities committed by the Japanese. FDR, because of his misperceptions of America's colonial policies in the Philippines, failed to appreciate the unwillingness of the Koreans to remain patient for another twenty to forty years. Perhaps Roosevelt would have done well to reflect on his lecture to Churchill at Cairo when he stated, "A new period has opened in the world's history, and you [Churchill] will have to adjust yourself to it."[12]

Yalta– Trusteeship in the Balance

With Germany facing imminent defeat, the leaders of the Grand Alliance– Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin met in February 1945 at the Crimean resort of Yalta to determine the settlement of Europe. Although there was a general sense of confidence and elation over the military successes of the previous year, it was apparent to the Americans that they would encounter British opposition to any proposal for a Korean trusteeship.[13]

On February 8 Roosevelt and Stalin met privately to discuss the future of Asia, and in particular, Korea. Roosevelt suggested Korea become a trusteeship administered by American, Soviet, and Chinese representatives. He believed that this would be a long-term

[10] J. N. Westwood, Russia Against Japan, 1904-1905: A New Look at the Russo-Japanese War. (New York: State University of New York Press, 1986), 2.

[11] Burton I. Kaufman, The Korean War: Challenges in Crisis, Credibility, and Command. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 5-6.

[12] Bruce Cumings, The Origins of the Korean War, vol. 1. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 108.

[13] Ibid.

arrangement; perhaps twenty to thirty years before the Koreans were capable of self government. Roosevelt explained that he based this estimate on America's experience with the Philippines who had required fifty years of tutelage. Roosevelt used this analogy often in discussions of Korean trusteeship. He would always point with pride to the American record of benevolence in helping the Filipinos prepare themselves for independence that America would grant automatically when the war with Japan ended.[14]

Stalin expressed reservations over the duration of the trusteeship preferring to let the Koreans establish their own form of government. His primary concern was whether the trusteeship would involve the stationing of military forces in Korea. Obviously Stalin had no interest in having American forces on the Asian mainland after the end of the war. Roosevelt assured Stalin that no foreign troops would be stationed in Korea. At this point, Stalin agreed with the concept of a trusteeship for Korea.[15]

Roosevelt needed to reach an agreement with Stalin on a related question of a sensitive nature: FDR wanted the British excluded from the Korean trusteeship. The Far East had become an American sphere of influence and Roosevelt intended to exclude the British from this area. The President acknowledged that the British would undoubtedly resent this exclusion. Stalin agreed on that point and pointed out that Mr. Churchill "might kill us" if America and the Soviet Union attempted to exclude Great Britain from the trusteeship. For this reason, Stalin believed she [Britain] should participate in the trusteeship. Rather than press the issue and reach agreement on the composition of the trusteeship, Roosevelt changed the subject and began discussing the postwar future of Indo-China. Thus, FDR's desire to exclude the British from Korea had created an unexpected obstacle to an US-Soviet agreement on a Korean trusteeship. Although Stalin agreed with the concept, he would not entertain a proposal to exclude the British from the trusteeship.[16]

On the following day at the sixth plenary session, the Allies entered into discussions on the idea of a Korean trusteeship that immediately elicited a vituperative attack from Churchill. According to an American account, Mr. Churchill thundered, to Stalin's amuse-

---

[14] Ibid., 108-109.

[15] Sir John Wheeler-Bennett and Anthony Nicholls, The Semblance of Peace: the Political Settlement after the Second World War. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1972), 245.

[16] Diane S. Clemens, Yalta. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 248-249.

ment, that, "Under no circumstances would he ever consent to forty or fifty nations thrusting interfering fingers into the life's existence of the British Empire." As long as he was Prime Minister, he would never yield one scrap of their heritage.[17]

The British believed– and with good reason– that the Americans were attempting to use the trusteeship concept as a method of undermining the Imperial Powers' authority over their colonial possessions. For the Americans, the preferred vehicle for exercising control over the trusteeships was the United Nations rather than the colonial powers. For their part, the British hoped to limit the influence of the U.N. by establishing regional advisory commissions for the trusteeships that would exert little authority.[18]

As a result of British opposition, the language of the protocol dealing with trusteeships made it clear that only enemy territories and those formerly under the League of Nations would come under the category of trusteeships. This excluded Britain from having its colonies subject to U.N. influence and control. Churchill had gained a significant victory. The Americans capitulated and acknowledged that the trusteeship concept did not refer to the British Empire.[19]

The Yalta Conference failed to produce a firm agreement on the postwar trusteeship of Korea. The private discussion between Roosevelt and Stalin was nothing more than an informal, verbal understanding. This situation troubled Washington policy makers since under the terms of the Yalta Agreement the Soviet Union would occupy neighboring Manchuria. Accordingly, American planners looked to the Potsdam Conference as the final opportunity to achieve their principle objective– to reach Allied agreement on a Korean trusteeship. At a minimum, the State Department wanted Soviet adherence to the Cairo Declaration since this document implied a formal approval of a trusteeship for Korea.[20]

The Potsdam Conference– A Missed Opportunity

The Potsdam Conference was primarily a result of Churchill's efforts. Concerned

[17] Sir John Wheeler-Bennett and Anthony Nicholls, The Semblance of Peace: the Political Settlement after the Second World War. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1972), 248.

[18] Ibid., 246-247.

[19] Bruce Cumings, The Origins of the Korean War, vol. 1. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 109-110.

[20] Ibid., 112.

about the continuing advance of the Red Army, he wanted to convene a conference of the Great Powers as soon as possible. The delay in convening the conference disappointed him for two reasons. First, the fact that the conference would occur after the defeat of Germany meant that the Soviet Union would have consolidated its position in Eastern Europe. This would place Stalin in a stronger negotiating position than had been the case at Yalta. Second, Great Britain would be holding elections for Prime Minister during the conference. Mr. Churchill would have preferred to have the elections behind him rather than be distracted about their outcome.[21]

Potsdam differed from Cairo and Yalta in tone, style, and substance. As noted, it convened following a total victory over Germany. The war in the Pacific, which the Soviet Union had not entered at this point, was drawing to a close. It was clear that the Japanese would not be capable of holding out for the eighteen-month period estimated by the Combined Chiefs of Staff. For these reasons, there was a feeling of relaxation, absence of necessity, and consequently, a greater exchange of opinions.[22]

Truman, a newcomer to the stage of international politics, was understandably apprehensive about meeting with Churchill and Stalin. Truman's personal goals at Potsdam were simple. He wanted to establish himself as a world leader in control of the United States government and salvage what he could of Soviet pledges made at the Yalta Conference. Most important, he wanted to solidify Moscow's agreement to enter the war against Japan.[23]

For his part, Stalin wanted to ensure that Roosevelt's successor honored the pledges made at Yalta. In exchange, the Soviet Union would enter the war against Japan. In particular, the Soviets desired an agreement on the issue of a trusteeship for Korea. On July 3, 1945, at a meeting in Moscow, Averell Harriman wired Truman that Stalin's talks with Chinese representative Soong concerning Korea had resulted in agreement over a trusteeship for Korea. Molotov, the Soviet Foreign Minister, had added that this was an

[21] Charles E. Bohlen, Witness to History: 1929-1969. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1973), 226.

[22] Ibid., 227.

[23] Ibid., 229.

unusual agreement that would require a detailed understanding.[24]

State Department planners, anticipating Soviet motives, had prepared a briefing paper for Truman's use at Potsdam that said:

> It is possible that the Soviet Union will make strong demands that it have a leading part in the control of Korean affairs. If such demands required the establishment of an administrative authority in which powers other than the Soviet Union had only a nominal voice, it might be advisable to designate Korea as a trust area and to place it under the authority of the United Nations organization itself.[25]

On July 22, 1945, Stalin began discussions on trusteeships by recommending that Korea be the first topic. Churchill responded by raising the issue of Italian colonies in Africa. Molotov commented that he had read in the foreign press that Italy had lost its colonies and he was curious who had received them and when the allies had made this decision. Churchill responded he had in mind Libya, Cyrenaica, and Tripoli that the British Army had defeated single-handedly. Molotov observed that Berlin had been captured by the Red Army implying that if the British intended to retain the Italian colonies based on this reasoning that the Soviets should have sole possession of Berlin. Churchill replied that, "He did not understand the Soviets' position. Did they desire a share of the Italian colonies?" In an atmosphere of hostility amid recriminations of bad faith, discussions on a postwar trusteeship for Korea failed to materialize. For the third time, the Allies postponed the Korean question until a Council of Foreign Ministers meeting scheduled for December 1945.[26]

Although Potsdam was unsuccessful in reaching a decision on the structure of a Korean trusteeship, it did achieve the State Department's secondary goal– Soviet adherence to the Cairo Declaration.[27] After Potsdam, there was little incentive for the Soviet Union to cooperate as a member of the new world order. Discrepancies between the systems were great and the hostility of the Soviet Union towards capitalist countries too entrenched.[28]

---

[24] Bruce Cumings, The Origins of the Korean War, vol. 1. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 112.

[25] Ibid., 115.

[26] Stephen E. Ambrose, Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy since 1938. (London: Penguin Press, 1971), 123.

[27] Encyclopedia Britannica, 15th ed., s.v. "Korea.," 520.

[28] Charles E. Bohlen, Witness to History: 1929-1969. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1973), 240.

Another consequence of Potsdam was the shift in American policy towards Korea. Under Roosevelt, the trusteeship idea reflected a desire to provide the circumstances for former territories to achieve their independence. After Roosevelt, the State Department became more influential in determining the direction of the trusteeship idea. At Potsdam, America was proposing to project its power onto the Asian mainland and to challenge the Soviet Union in a country contiguous to its borders, one that had long held Soviet interests. Now, trusteeship was just another means of securing American interests; it was not merely a mean of maintaining American interests while acknowledging the Soviets' as well. These contradictions and ambiguities of American foreign policy towards Korea would continue to persist until 1950.[29]

Perhaps more significant than the agreements reached at Potsdam was the opinion of the Soviets that Truman took back to Washington. On his trip home from Potsdam he wrote that the only thing the Russians understood was force. As a result, he decided he would no longer 'take chances in a joint setup with the Russians,' since they were impossible to get along with. Truman rejected the obvious explanation– that Stalin was merely acting in the best interests of the USSR. The result of this mind set was a decision to exclude the Soviets from Japan by giving General MacArthur complete command and control after victory over Japan. Truman had already substituted Stalin for Hitler as the madman that threatened the free world. Potsdam had established the tone for the Cold War; it had set the stage for misunderstanding and suspicion that would have far reaching effects on Soviet-American relations.[30]

Finally, Potsdam was important because it revealed the primary American foreign policy tool of the Cold War– the atomic bomb. Besides ending the war with Japan, Truman believed that sole possession of the bomb would, in Secretary of War Stimson's words, result in "less barbarous relations with the Russians," or as Secretary of State Byrnes remarked in June 1945, the bomb "would make Russia more manageable in Europe." The bomb, in conjunction with America's economic prowess, gave the Truman

[29] Bruce Cumings, The Origins of the Korean War, vol. 1. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 116-117.

[30] Stephen E. Ambrose, Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy since 1938. (London: Penguin Press, 1971), 126.

Administration an almost uncontrollable sense of power. In their minds, it was inconceivable that the Soviets could avoid adhering to agreements made by Stalin. From Potsdam on, the bomb was the single constant foreign policy tool when interacting with the Soviet Union. Stimson viewed this policy as wearing this weapon rather ostentatiously on our hip, which he later came to fear and believed that it merely fed their [Soviets] suspicions and their distrust of our purposes and motives.[31] In fact, the US learned very quickly that the atomic bomb was not the diplomatic trump-card they had envisioned. The occasion for this lesson was the Council of Foreign Ministers meeting held in London in September 1945. At this conference Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov served notice to Secretary of State Byrnes that the Russians were not susceptible to intimidation by the bomb.[32]

[31] Ibid., 126-127.

[32] Gregg Herken, The Winning Weapon: The Atomic Bomb in the Cold War, 19450-1950. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 48-49.

CHAPTER III

THE BEGINNING OF THE COLD WAR– CONTAINMENT IN KOREA

The record of the Potsdam Conference reflects the unanimous opinion of American military planners on the necessity of the Soviet Union entering the war against Japan. A key planning document stated, "With reference to clean-up of the Asiatic mainland, our objective should be to get the Russians to deal with the Japs in Manchuria (and Korea if necessary)." General George C. Marshall, Army Chief of Staff, further clarified America's position concerning Korea at the Tripartite Military Meeting of July 24, 1945, when he responded to a Russian query on the possibility of joint American-Soviet operations against the Japanese in Korea. American amphibious operations, he said, "had not been contemplated, and particularly not in the near future;" "there were no additional assault ships which could permit a landing in Korea [and] the possibility of an attack on Korea would have to be determined after the landings at Kyushu." The American planners intended to leave Korean operations, and the expected high casualties, to the Soviet land armies. For this, Washington was willing to pay a high price. The American military was prepared to grant the Soviets their goals as a quid pro quo because it was believed that Soviet entry into the war would be the decisive lever needed to bring Japan to the negotiating table.[1]

On reflection, it might have been more prudent to have permitted the Soviet Union to occupy Korea unilaterally. In retrospect, it is certainly questionable how much influence the Soviets could have exercised in Northeast Asia. Furthermore, it is quite possible that Stalin might have accepted a neutralized Korea with a coalition government consisting of non-Communists and Communists. This hypothesis gains credibility when we recall that

[1] Bruce Cumings, The Origins of the Korean War, vol. 1. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 118.

Stalin's main interest at Yalta regarding Korea was to prevent military occupation by the trustee powers. Contrary to American opinion, Stalin was more concerned about securing the Soviet borders than in spreading Communism. For example, in France, Italy, Greece, and China, Stalin often counseled restraint rather than encouraging the Communists to seize power.[2] While he insisted on a tightly controlled sphere of influence along his borders, he urged Communists outside the Soviet Union to cooperate with coalition governments. Given these facts, it is reasonable to assume Stalin would have been receptive to a proposal that permitted the Soviets a free hand in Korea. Finally, there is no indication that during World War II Stalin had any strategic interest in Korea.[3]

The Partitioning of Korea– Defining Spheres-of-Influence

The Soviets entered the war against Japan on August 10, 1945, with an offensive into Manchuria. Because of Manchuria's proximity to Korea, Soviet troops entered the peninsula first on August 12. Accompanying the Soviet troops were approximately 30,000 Korean Communist refugees who were immediately placed in positions of authority to establish a functioning government in the area controlled by the Soviets. The Soviets assumed that the regime in Korea was dependable; therefore, Moscow permitted the Koreans greater freedom in carrying out their revolutionary goals. The result was a greater degree of political participation by Koreans in the North not seen in southern Korea. The Americans, alarmed at the prospect of the Soviets occupying the entire peninsula, hastily convened an emergency session of the standing State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee (SWNCC). The committee formulated a proposal for dividing Korea into northern and southern zones at the 38th Parallel for the purposes of accepting the Japanese surrender.[4]

Already concerned about Soviet intentions, the Americans wanted to accept the surrender as far north as possible. Dean Rusk was present at the meeting and observed that

[2] John L. Gaddis, Russia, the Soviet Union, and the United States. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1978), 177-178.

[3] Burton I. Kaufman, The Korean War: Challenges in Crisis, Credibility, and Command. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 6.

[4] Russell D. Buhite, Soviet-American Relations in Asia, 1945-1954. (University of Oklahoma Press, 1981), 143.

the thirty-eighth parallel was "further north than could be realistically reached [by American forces] in the event of Soviet disagreement"; and when the Soviets agreed to the proposed division, he was "somewhat surprised." Clearly, the selection of this line was a test of Soviet intentions. Would the Soviets agree to the request or continue their advance South?[5]

Stalin agreed with the proposal probably because he considered the line as delineating a sphere-of-influence. Perhaps he viewed the 38th parallel as being consistent with a Czarist proposal of 1895– to accept suzerainty north of the 38th parallel. Although the Soviets may have preferred a united, friendly Korea, a divided Korea would also serve the security interests of the Soviet Union– safeguard Soviet concessions in Manchuria, influence events in China, and neutralize resurgent Japanese power. William Morris suggests that Stalin's actions may have been out of a desire to maintain Allied cooperation. Regardless, the Soviets acquiesced to the American proposal when they could have seized complete control of the peninsula.[6]

At this juncture it may be instructive to recount Soviet decisions and actions concerning Korea's postwar status. At Yalta Roosevelt obtained Stalin's personal commitment for a Korean trusteeship following the defeat of Japan. Stalin's actions at Yalta suggest that his intentions towards Korea were more benevolent than Roosevelt's since he [Stalin] preferred Korean independence [presumably if the government was pro-Soviet] to a trusteeship. At Potsdam, the Soviets affirmed the Cairo Declaration which provided for a Korean trusteeship. Finally, as we have seen, Stalin agreed with the Americans in designating the 38th parallel as the line for accepting the Japanese surrender even though the Soviets were capable of occupying the entire peninsula. An analysis of these events does not suggest that the Soviets were attempting to mislead or deceive the Allies regarding their intentions in Korea. Like American policy makers, the Soviet Union was pursuing its own national interests.

In sharp contrast to Soviet actions north of the 38th parallel, the Americans arrived in Korea ill-prepared for the situation they encountered. Korea was in the midst of political

[5] Bruce Cumings, The Origins of the Korean War, vol. 1. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 121.

[6] Ibid.

and social upheaval as various groups all claimed title to Korean leadership. Official American policy was to contain the situation by not recognizing any group as the legitimate government. Instead, the country would be administered by the American Military Government (AMG). In the absence of specific instructions, Lieutenant General John Hodge, the commander of American troops, quickly established close relations with the Korean Democratic Party (KDP) and other anti-Communist organizations while simultaneously refusing assistance from the Korean People's Party (KPR).[7] Thus, in the North the Soviets allowed Korean nationalists, that is Korean Communists, greater autonomy in administering the country while in the South the AMG retained a tight grip. It should come as no surprise that the AMG quickly incurred the wrath of South Koreans who were too impatient to achieve independence in "due course."

The Moscow Foreign Ministers Conference

By the fall of 1945 the polarization of Korean politics had made great strides. As trouble built, American policy makers began to question the wisdom of pursuing the trusteeship in view of the existing American military occupation. William Langdon, a political adviser in Seoul, believed that from moral and practical standpoints the issue should be dropped. General MacArthur concurred with this recommendation and recommended that American officials consider making an agreement with the Soviets "to withdraw forces from Korea simultaneously and leave Korea to its own devices and an inevitable internal upheaval for its self purification." The State Department also shared these concerns but believed that the trusteeship was the only way to remove the 38th parallel barrier thereby creating the circumstances for independence "in due course." It was against this backdrop of conflicting opinions that Secretary Byrnes traveled to Moscow to negotiate a trusteeship with Molotov.[8]

At Moscow Byrnes and Molotov agreed to establish a joint American-Soviet

[7] Burton I. Kaufman, The Korean War: Challenges in Crisis, Credibility, and Command. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 9-11.

[8] Russell D. Buhite, Soviet-American Relations in Asia, 1945-1954. (University of Oklahoma Press, 1981), 146-147.

commission to prepare Korea for unity and independence. The primary task of the commission was to consult with Korean leaders on establishing a provisional, all-Korean government and to reestablish economic trade between the zones.[9] The Joint Commission and the Provisional Government would cooperate in furthering the economic, social, and political development of Korea; however, all proposals would be subject to review and approval by a four-power trusteeship as envisioned in the Cairo Declaration.[10]

Koreans, non-Communists and Communists, believed that the Moscow agreement confirmed their worst fears about the Great Powers. Their anger resulted in violent demonstrations throughout Korea. American planners in Washington had anticipated that the "trusteeship" would meet stiff resistance in the South. Accordingly, Byrnes and others began downplaying that part of the agreement and suggested that a trusteeship might not be necessary if the Joint Commission and the Provisional Government could administer the country. Because the agreement served its interests, Moscow intervened in the North to discipline any opposition to trusteeship. As a result, membership in the Moscow-sponsored Korean Communist Party (KCP) declined significantly. Thus, as the United States, which had pursued trusteeship since 1943, was denying association with the concept, the Soviet Union, which had never been supportive of the idea, was taking steps to implement the provisions of the agreement. Understandably, Stalin probably felt misled upon learning of the American reversal. In response, the Soviets published reports in Tass and *Izvestia* assigning blame for the concept on the United States.[11]

The Joint Commission convened between March and May 1946 but met with little success becoming deadlocked over the question of consulting with Korean social and political groups. The Soviets insisted that groups opposing the Moscow agreement should be excluded from consultations, thereby preventing the rightist groups, i.e., non-Communists, from participating. The Americans rejected this proposal arguing that all groups were of equal importance, regardless of their political affiliation or opposition to the Moscow agreement. In the absence of an agreement on procedures, the commissioned

[9] Joyce and Gabriel Kolko, The Limits of Power. (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 289.

[10] Russell D. Buhite, Soviet-American Relations in Asia, 1945-1954. (University of Oklahoma Press, 1981), 148.

[11] Ibid., 148-149.

adjourned *sine die* on May 6.[12] The central issue of the commission was that the Americans had a government in the South that they hoped to extend North to the Soviet zone, and the Soviets had a government in the North that they hoped to extend to the American zone. The problem for the Americans was that the Soviet-supported form of government existed throughout the South as well.[13]

The other obstacle was the bellicose attitude of the American representative. General Albert Brown, the United States representative to the commission, openly expressed his belief in the inescapability of war with the USSR. General Hodge's political adviser commented during the meetings that "I believe in the inevitability and necessity of conflict with Russia."[14]

The rationale for Stalin's actions regarding the exclusion of rightist groups remains a mystery. Perhaps he was concerned over the decline in Korean Communist membership in the North and South. Discounting the use of force, eliminating the rightists from participation in the government was the only method of achieving a united Communist Korea.[15] However, there is no direct evidence that suggests Stalin was committed to a united Communist Korea at this time. As we have seen, he believed a North Korea was sufficient for Soviet security interests. It appears that many Americans had difficulty accepting any Soviet interests as worthy of respect. Undoubtedly, Stalin remembered the American treachery over the trusteeship concept.

Towards a Separate State

Following the termination of the Joint Commission, the United States began to reevaluate its objectives regarding Korea. A unified, independent Korea would promote political stability in the region and guard against Soviet encroachment in Manchuria. Furthermore, settlement of the Korean question was important to Soviet-American

---

[12] Joyce and Gabriel Kolko, The Limits of Power. (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 289-290.

[13] Bruce Cumings, The Origins of the Korean War, vol. 1. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 245.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Russell D. Buhite, Soviet-American Relations in Asia, 1945-1954. (University of Oklahoma Press, 1981). 150.

relations. To this end, American officials directed General Hodge to authorize the establishment of an interim legislative assembly in South Korea effective August 24, 1945. The assembly, which began functioning on December 12, did not fulfill the expectations of the Korean people; however, it did exemplify the new American approach towards involving the Korean people in determining their future.[16]

In the fall of 1946, the Soviets surprised everyone by expressing a willingness to resume the work of the joint commission. It is likely that this unexpected reversal was a response to recent events in the South, especially the establishment of an interim legislative assembly. American planners welcomed the opportunity to reconvene the Joint Commission meetings. Simultaneously, General Hodge forwarded reports that the Soviet Union was preparing the North Koreans for an invasion of the South sometime that winter. The reports claimed that the invasion might be a subterfuge to bring about a Soviet-American troop withdrawal; however, it could occur even if the United States remained in South Korea.[17] General Hoyt Vandenberg, Director of the Central Intelligence Group, did not share General Hodge's assessment of Soviet intentions. In General Vandenberg's opinion, it was unlikely that the Soviets would instigate a military invasion of the South as long as the "prospects for a satisfactory political solution were judged to be promising." He cited the Soviets' renewed interests in the Joint Commission as an example. To the contrary, Vandenberg felt that large numbers of North Koreans were more likely to infiltrate into the South and conduct sabotage and create disorder as a mean of further discrediting the American military government.[18]

The end of 1946 and the beginning of 1947 witnessed a transition in United States-Korean policy. There were several reasons for this shift. First, events in the Mediterranean and Europe were monopolizing American interests and resources (See chapter 4). Second, Congress, in the absence of an identifiable threat, continued to insist on a post-war military drawdown. As a result, the Administration was forced to scrutinize defense spending to meet its global commitments. Third, Korean nationalists were

[16] Ibid., 150-152.

[17] Ibid., 153.

[18] Vandenberg to Truman, October 30, 1946, Box 243, Intelligence File, President's Secretary File, Truman Papers.

insisting that the United States turn the government of the South, i.e., the interim legislative assembly, over to them. Finally, few in the Administration viewed Korea as vital to the United States. The Army was eager to withdraw from the peninsula.[19]

It was under these circumstances that Secretary of State Marshall organized a State Department high-level committee and directed a reassessment of American policy towards Korea. The committee recognized that the current situation in Korea, i.e., the growing antagonism of the Korean people towards the military government, could not continue; however, the United States could not withdraw from Korea because it had made a commitment to establish an independent and unified Korea. More important, the committee argued that withdrawal would cause a loss of "prestige" for the United States in its contest with the Soviet Union. A withdrawal would send the wrong message to other struggling nations, e.g., Greece and Turkey, that the United States was not committed to their cause. Accordingly, the committee recommended that the United States remain in Korea and pursue an ambitious plan. The plan called for: appropriating $600 million in aid for Korea of which $250 million should be earmarked for 1948; diminishing the role of the military government and appointing a high commissioner; installing more Koreans in the government; and soliciting American business, financial, and education groups to visit Korea to assist in nation-building. The overarching goal of the plan was to implement a program that would establish an independent South Korea. Finally, the committee recommended that the United States implement this plan concurrent with approaching the Soviets on the possibility of resuming the Joint Commission meetings.[20]

In March 1947 at the Moscow Foreign Ministers Conference Marshall approached Molotov on the possibility of resuming commission meetings. Molotov surprised the Americans by agreeing to reconvene the commission. Having established the rules for participating groups; a stumbling block in the previous discussions, the meetings resumed on May 29, 1947. Any optimism about progress at the negotiating table was soon overcome by subsequent events. No sooner had the Americans and Soviets resumed their

[19] Russell D. Buhite, Soviet-American Relations in Asia, 1945-1954. (University of Oklahoma Press, 1981), 153-154.

[20] Ibid., 155.

talks in Seoul than Syngman Rhee and his followers incited riots to oppose the talks. Irritated by the event, the Soviets again raised objections about right-wing extremist groups being permitted to participate in the talks. In response, the AMG encouraged Rhee to verbally attack the USSR. By July the situation had deteriorated to the point where Rhee's henchmen were assaulting members of the Soviet delegation in Seoul. As a result, the negotiations reached an impasse again with the Soviets repeating their earlier demand that right-wing extremist groups be disqualified from participation in the meetings. To the Americans it appeared that the Soviets were only willing to discuss the Korean problem on their own terms.[21] Undoubtedly, the Soviets had a similar perception of the obstinate Americans. Knowing the strength of the Communist movement in the South, Moscow must have viewed the AMG's position towards the right-wing groups that were more numerous and therefore would have greater influence in the meetings, as an attempt to undermine and minimize Korean communist participation in the commission.

The failure of the commission to reach agreement on the future government for a unified Korea precipitated another policy assessment by the United States. Accordingly, John Allison, assistant chief of the Northeast Asian Affairs Division at State, prepared a memorandum recommending a different approach. Allison's proposal called for a four-power conference at which the United States would make specific proposals. First, North and South Korea would hold elections to select legislatures for each zone. Second, these legislatures, having been elected by the populace, would elect an executive. Next, these executive and legislature bodies would elect representatives who would form a provisional government for the entire country. To guard against voting improprieties, the United Nations would provide observers for each election. If the Soviet Union balked at the proposal, the United States would refer the matter to the UN.[22]

The high-level committee formed by Marshall as well as the interagency approved the Allison plan. The plan provided something for everyone: for those who favored reducing American involvement in Korea it provided a means for gradually withdrawing

[21] Joyce and Gabriel Kolko, The Limits of Power. (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 294.

[22] Russell D. Buhite, Soviet-American Relations in Asia, 1945-1954. (University of Oklahoma Press, 1981), 157-158.

the army and reducing the economic commitment; for policymakers who were concerned about a loss of "prestige" the plan shifted the responsibility to the United Nations.[23]

No one expected the Soviets to agree with the proposed plan. The State department preferred that the USSR reject the proposal since their participation in a four-power conference had the potential of becoming another deadlock thereby preventing the United States from extricating itself from the Korean problem. The Soviets did not disappoint the Americans. On September 5, 1947, Molotov rejected the American proposal.[24]

The Soviet response occasioned open debate by American policymakers on a schism that had been developing in the preceding months. Joseph Jacobs, a political adviser in Seoul, observed that America's problem with Korea was due to a failure to determine Korea's strategic value to the United States. Given our global commitments, "is South Korea one that might safely be abandoned?" Jacobs was suggesting that once the United States had determined Korea's strategic importance, a coherent policy would ensue. George Kennan of the State Policy Planning Staff appreciated Jacobs' analysis. In support, Kennan wrote to Walton Butterworth, director of the Office of Far Eastern Affairs and recommended that in view of the military's opinion that Korea is not militarily essential to the United States, "we should cut our losses and get out of there as gracefully but promptly as possible."[25]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff supported Kennan's recommendations in a report to State on Korea's military value. At present, the report stated, American forces in Korea could be more useful in other regions. Furthermore, the joint chiefs explained, "the withdrawal of these forces from Korea would not impair the military position of the Far East Command unless, in consequence, the Soviets establish military strength in South Korea capable of mounting an assault in Japan." The joint chiefs discounted the significance of this potential threat by claiming that, "neutralization of this threat would be cheaper and easier through air operations from Japan and the Ryukyus than through large-scale ground operations [from

[23] Ibid., 158.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid., 157.

Korea]."[26] It was evident that the Joint Chiefs of Staff considered Korea more of a liability than an asset.

In contrast to this view some officials believed that the United States should implement the measures outlined in the recently approved Allison plan. Francis Stevens, assistant chief of the Division of Eastern European Affairs, advocated a "go slow" policy in withdrawing from Korea. To do otherwise, he stated, would, "allow Korea to go by default and fall within the Soviet orbit." As a result, the world would view this as another loss in our effort to halt Soviet expansionist designs. Secretary of Defense Forrestal, voicing support for this position, disagreed with the joint chiefs. He believed that withdrawal of forces would result in a loss of "military prestige" and quite possibly affect our security assistance efforts in more important regions.[27]

In the summer of 1947, President Truman dispatched Lieutenant General Albert C. Wedemeyer to China and Korea on a fact-finding mission. Concerning Korea, the Wedemeyer report recommended "moral, advisory, and material support" to South Korea. In his opinion, the United States should increase economic aid to $500 million over the next five years to build up the level of self-sufficiency. In addition, Wedemeyer recommended that the American occupation army of 40,000 remain until such time as the Soviets and Americans can negotiate the withdrawal of foreign troops. His reasons for these recommendations were remarkably similar to the arguments presented by Francis Stevens and his supporters; that withdrawal of United States forces from the peninsula would result in either Soviet, or "more likely," North Korean military units moving South across the thirty-eight parallel, with the result being the creation of a Soviet satellite Communist regime throughout Korea. The consequences for the United States would be a loss of moral prestige with a possible repercussions in Japan and a corresponding gain for the Soviet Union.[28]

Because the Administration became preoccupied with the "imponderables," associated with the issue, the opponents of withdrawal gained the upper hand. As a result,

[26] William W. Stueck, The Wedemeyer Mission. (University of Georgia Press, 1984), 85.

[27] Russell D. Buhite, Soviet-American Relations in Asia, 1945-1954. (University of Oklahoma Press, 1981), 160.

[28] William W. Stueck, The Wedemeyer Mission. (University of Georgia Press, 1984), 80-85.

policymakers began implementing the proposals of the Allison plan. The Soviets responded to the United States' proposal by stating categorically that the UN General Assembly had no authority in this matter. Instead, the Soviets called for a mutual withdrawal of troops not later than January 2, 1948. Clearly, Moscow felt that with the withdrawal of troops, the Communists would gain control of the entire peninsula. The Soviet proposal was a clever tactic that embarrassed the United States and South Korea. Having argued for trusteeship and the withdrawal of foreign troops; the Koreans found themselves face to face with the potential realization of their position. However, in view of the capabilities of the Soviet-equipped and trained North Korean army and the potential for an invasion of the South, the United States rejected the Soviet proposal.[29]

The Election of 1948 and the New Republic

In October 1947 the United States introduced a resolution in the UN General Assembly calling for free elections throughout Korea not later than March 31, 1948. The Soviets, as expected, attacked the resolution arguing that the resolution was in conflict with the Moscow Agreement; that the UN should consult with leaders in the North and South to determine their preferences prior to establishing a commission; and that foreign troops should be withdrawn before elections are held. As expected, American influence in the UN prevailed and the Soviets boycotted the vote claiming that they would not abide by any UN decision on this issue.[30]

In January 1948, a UN Temporary Commission arrived in Seoul to supervise the election of an all-Korean national assembly. The Soviets, who had already made their position known in the General Assembly, refused to grant the Commission access to the North. Understandably, the members of the Commission were divided over whether to proceed with the election in the South. They feared that an election in the South would result in Korea becoming irreversibly split. Moderate and leftist groups in the South also feared the consequences of an election in the South. It was likely that an election would

[29] Russell D. Buhite, Soviet-American Relations in Asia, 1945-1954. (University of Oklahoma Press, 1981), 161.

[30] Joyce and Gabriel Kolko, The Limits of Power. (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 295.

mean a victory for the extreme Right wing party of Syngman Rhee.[31]

To frustrate the Commission's plans for the election, the North Korean political leaders held two conferences in April at Pyongyang. Southern political leaders were invited and attended. The conferences passed resolutions upholding the Soviet position; called for the withdrawal of foreign troops; promised an all-Korean election; and agreed to ignore the scheduled elections in the South. General Hodge and Rhee's party denounced the conferences and the southern attendees as "stooges of Communism." While many of the southern participants were undoubtedly communist sympathizers, many of the southerners attended the conference with the sincere hope of moving towards unification.[32] Regrettably, General Hodge's remarks only served to alienate the moderate and cooperative leftist groups from the AMG. Given the recalcitrant Rhee, Hodge could have benefited from the support of these groups.

On May 10, 1948, the UN Commission observed elections in South Korea. The propriety of the election procedures must be considered dubious for several reasons. First, the AMG was responsible for planning and organizing the election since the Koreans had no experience in this area. Second, police excesses and violence by Rhee's followers were observed by members of the Commission. In addition, the AMG authorized the police to deputize large bands of "loyal citizens" in the interest of maintaining law and order. The deputies patrolled the countryside terrorizing the populace during the elections until the AMG disbanded them in late May. Finally, persons with a police record were barred from voting, effectively eliminating the leftist and nationalist Right groups from participation. Under these circumstances, the State Department's impressive report that 80 percent of eligible voters registered and an estimated 92.5 percent cast their ballots must be viewed with skepticism.[33]

Nevertheless, the UN Commission declared the results valid in those parts of Korea where it had access. On May 31, the National Assembly met and elected Syngman Rhee president. Accordingly, on August 15, 1948, with MacArthur and Rhee making

[31] Robert D. Warth, Soviet Russia in World Politics. (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1963), 391.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Joyce and Gabriel Kolko, The Limits of Power. (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 297-298.

inflammatory speeches directed towards the Russians; the government of the Republic of Korea was inaugurated in the southern half of Korea.[34]

The North Korean People's Committee responded in similar fashion by adopting a Soviet-style constitution on May 1, 1948, and proclaimed its applicability throughout Korea. On 22-24 August over 1,000 delegates claiming to represent the people of South Korea met just north of the 38th parallel and elected 360 deputies to serve in the northern assembly. On 25 August, Pyongyang radio announced that over 8,000,000 South Koreans had participated in a recent election of the "people's assembly!" On September 7 the people's assembly met and inaugurated the government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) with Kim Il Sung as premier. On October 12 the Soviet Union conferred diplomatic recognition and appointed General Shtykov as their ambassador.[35] The permanent division of Korea that the UN Commission had anticipated was now a reality. Events in Korea were leading towards a profound crisis.

A Policy Dilemma

In November 1947, the UN General Assembly had mandated the withdrawal of foreign troops following the establishment of an independent national government in Korea. For this reason, the months preceding the elections witnessed an attempt by the State Department to sustain a strong Korea policy. In part, this was due to the realization that by the end of 1948 the United States would have completed its troop withdrawal from Korea. In addition, State and certain executive branch officials felt that the United States had an obligation to ensure the survival of South Korea. The Department of the Army disagreed with the State position and continued planning for the withdrawal of troops.[36]

The National Security Council, in response to these deliberations, produced a major policy paper on 2 April 1948 known as NSC 8. NSC 8 concluded that South Korean forces should be built up "*as a means of providing, so far as practicable, effective*

[34] Robert D. Warth, Soviet Russia in World Politics. (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1963), 392.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Russell D. Buhite, Soviet-American Relations in Asia, 1945-1954 (University of Oklahoma Press, 1981), 163.

protection for the security of South Korea against any but an overt act of aggression (emphasis added)." The paper cited December 31, 1948, as the projected withdrawal date for US troops; however, this was contingent on training a South Korean constabulary capable of maintaining internal security and establishing an economic relief and rehabilitation program to halt the economy's decline.[37]

The State Department seized on this document and events in Europe as a means of delaying the withdrawal of forces. In response to the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia and worsening Berlin situation, President Truman had directed Secretary Forrestal to submit a supplemental appropriations bill to Congress requesting authorization to increase army manpower to 240,000. State planners were optimistic that this action signaled the desire to align foreign policy obligations with military capabilities. Furthermore, they felt that Truman's action strengthened the case for delaying the withdrawal of forces from Korea.[38]

NSC 8 provided State with a temporary delay in the scheduled withdrawal of 7,500 US soldiers. This was due primarily because the paper advocated continued cooperation with the UN in determining the withdrawal schedule. Consequently, the Administration expressed the desire to conduct troop withdrawals in concert with UN resolutions. Since the General Assembly had not acted on this issue by late November, the army could not keep its 15 January 1949 departure date. However, on 12 December, the General Assembly passed a resolution directing, "that the occupying powers withdraw their armed forces from Korea as early as practicable."[39]

The General Assembly resolution effectively nullified the gains made by the State Department in fortifying Korean policy. Now, rather than be discouraged, State focused its efforts on developing new arguments for delaying the withdrawal. Max Bishop, who had replaced John Allison, led this effort. In a memorandum written by his assistant, Niles Bond, Bishop not only synthesized State's position, but expanded the argument by recommending that the NSC reexamine Korea's significance to American interests in the

[37] William W. Stueck, The Road to Confrontation: American Policy toward China and Korea, 1947-1950. (University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 99.

[38] Ibid., 100-101.

[39] Ibid., 105.

Pacific.[40]

Bishop realized that the JCS position was pivotal in halting the withdrawal of forces. Previously, the joint chiefs had stated that Korea was more of a liability than an asset and that Japan was far more important to American interests. If he could persuade the military that the loss of Korea had strategic consequences then perhaps he could succeed. Bishop claimed that the declining situation in China and the primacy of United States-Japan policy necessitated a reevaluation of decision to withdraw from Korea. According to Bishop, the Communists would dominate the peninsula thereby surrounding Japan on three sides– Sakhalin and the Kuriles in the northeast and Korea in the southwest.[41]

Aside from the issue of security for Japan, the loss of Korea would impact on the conclusion of the peace treaty with Japan and her economic recovery. Specifically, a Communist-controlled Korea would require the United States to maintain occupation forces in Japan for an indefinite period. These occupation forces would also impede the planned economic recovery of Japan. In essence, State had established a linkage between the future of Japan and Korea.[42]

Regrettably, Bishop's memorandum occurred during a period of transition within the State Department. Marshall had announced his retirement in January 1949, due to poor health. Lovett, Marshall's principle assistant planned to return to civilian life. However, Bishop had succeeded in convincing Butterworth that the issue warranted further analysis by the National Security Council.[43]

Secretary of State Dean Acheson did not believe that Bishop's arguments were sufficient to overrule the joint chiefs. Accordingly, when he took office the military establishment continued the scheduled withdrawal of forces. Acheson's position marked the ascendancy of a new policy– that Korea did not lie within America's defense perimeter. In January 1950, his speech on this issue at the National Press Club would have

---

[40] Ibid., 106.

[41] Russell D. Buhite, Soviet-American Relations in Asia, 1945-1954. (University of Oklahoma Press, 1981), 167.

[42] Ibid.

[43] William W. Stueck, The Road to Confrontation: American Policy toward China and Korea, 1947-1950. (University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 106.

unforeseen implications for the future of South Korea. Kim Il Sung probably viewed Acheson's remarks as an expression of US policy towards Korea, therefore, he assumed that any attack by the North would not result in America intervening to support the Rhee government.[44]

Growing Tensions

In January 1949, a seven-power UN Commission arrived in Korea for the purposes of assisting in the unification of Korea, removing trade barriers, and fostering social intercourse. As had become the practice, Moscow refused to permit the Commission access to the North. Instead, Pyongyang initiated a propaganda campaign accusing the Commission of being a "collection of hirelings of American imperialism." The South, specifically Rhee, further complicated the issue by refusing to cooperate with the Commission because it had attempted to negotiate with the Communists. Finally, Rhee denounced the Commission's efforts to work with Pyongyang since the General Assembly had recognized Seoul as the only legitimate government in Korea. On April 1, 1949, Rhee responded by banning all trade with North Korea.[45]

Rhee's repressive domestic policies reached new levels during the spring of 1949. In response, the people of Cheju Island and Chulnam took up arms and revolted. Despite Rhee's claims that the rebellion had been crushed, his forces continued to pursue the rebels in June. By the closing months of 1949, North Korea claimed there were 90,000 guerrillas fighting in the South. Seoul claimed killing 19,000 guerrillas. More important was the rising tension and frequency of armed clashes along the 38th parallel. Exacerbating this problem was the continuous demand by Rhee and his supporters for a march north to forcefully reunify the country. In October and November Rhee called for peaceful reunification if possible, but "if unfortunately, we cannot gain unity this year, we shall be compelled to unify our territory by ourselves."[46]

---

[44] Russell D. Buhite, Soviet-American Relations in Asia, 1945-1954. (University of Oklahoma Press, 1981), 168.

[45] Robert D. Warth, Soviet Russia in World Politics. (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1963), 393.

[46] Joyce and Gabriel Kolko, The Limits of Power. (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 568.

Although Washington was willing, albeit increasingly more reluctant, to support Rhee's corrupt regime, the Administration refused to provide offensive military hardware for Rhee's adventures. As William Sebald, State representative in Japan explained, "United States advisers refuse to give this [South Korean] force tanks, medium artillery, or military aircraft. It was feared that properly armed for offense, Rhee promptly would punch northward across the 38th parallel."[47]

During the first months of 1950, South Korea was also experiencing the effects of Rhee's policies. Economic collapse appeared imminent without substantial American aid. Since December 1949, the price of rice had tripled; the government continued to collect taxes on a voluntary basis; and the national budget was worsening because the black market was siphoning off American aid. In March, Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA) official Paul Hoffman warned South Korean officials that unless the economic situation improved the ECA would be forced to discontinue aid. The United States Congress began showing signs of wavering support to South Korea when the Republicans defeated the Administration's request for $150 million in aid. The Republicans argued that since a Communist takeover was imminent, providing aid to Korea would mean that they [Communists] would inherit American goods. In addition, Congress was reluctant to provide additional aid for the Korean "rathole," as described by one Ohio congressman, in view of the Administration's vacillating Korea policy. The divergent opinions within the State Department had manifested themselves in publicly alternating between describing South Korea as a test case for "democracy" in Asia, a nation where internal affairs were improving "and the threat of Communist overthrow appears to be be contained," and acknowledging the actual situation. Given these contradictions and the prevailing opinion in Congress, it took Truman's personal efforts to turn a legislative defeat into victory.[48] Interestingly, at the time Truman was pressing for passage of his Korean aid package he was simultaneously lowering the manpower level of the army to 667,000. Thus, as American commitments worldwide Truman was reducing defense expenditures. In part, his policy may be attributed to the prevailing concept shared by the White House and

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid., 569.

Capitol Hill of strength through air power and the commitment to a balanced budget.[49] Certainly these events, i.e., the conflicting policy statements, confrontations between Congress and the White House over South Korean aid, and Truman's reluctance to provide Rhee with offensive equipment, were noted with great interest in Moscow and Pyongyang. At a minimum, Stalin and Kim Il Sung may have surmised that even if Truman was committed to the defense of South Korea the American Congress would restrict his ability to follow through by withholding funds.

Arming the Belligerents

By June 1949 the withdrawal of foreign forces from Korea was complete. The Soviet Union had completed the process on December 24, 1948, and the United States evacuated the remaining regimental combat team of 7,500 men in June 1949. In the wake of this exodus, the US and USSR began arming their protectorates.[50]

As early as March 1949, through active recruiting, the South Korean army had increased to 65,000, the coast guard to 4,000, and the police force to 45,000– a total of 114,000. Although armed primarily with small arms, e.g., rifles, machineguns and 81mm mortars, the pace of the expansion combined with Rhee's statements concerning reunification through peace of force must have been of concern to Pyongyang. Because Washington remained unable to abandon Rhee, the American occupation forces left behind $110 million in arms that included: 100,000 small arms with large amounts of ammunition, 2,000 rocket launchers, light naval craft, 105mm howitzers and 20 training aircraft. This equipment enabled Rhee to expand the capabilities beyond merely a defensive capability. In March 1949 the South Korean army consisted of 114,000 men. By May 1950 this figure had climbed to 151,000. Rhee would add another 3,000 by June. In addition, the United States left behind approximately 500 officers and men to instruct them on how to use this equipment.[51]

---

[49] William W. Stueck, The Road to Confrontation: American Policy toward China and Korea, 1947-1950. (University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 108.

[50] Robert D. Warth, Soviet Russia in World Politics. (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1963), 393.

[51] Joyce and Gabriel Kolko, The Limits of Power. (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 573.

Supported by a small industrial base inherited from the Japanese, in 1948 North Korea began building a "defensive army" of approximately 30,000 men formed into four divisions and an armored regiment. *After* 1950, North Korea, with the help of the USSR, took several steps to improve the capabilities of its army. Initially, twelve thousand Korean veterans of the Chinese army returned home; the Soviets provided 150 T34 tanks along with a large amount of artillery giving the North Koreans a three-to-one advantage over the South Koreans in long range fires, and a small tactical air force. In April Rhee created twenty-one police battalions to relieve the army of the internal security mission thereby providing additional manpower to the army. Pyongyang responded by accelerating the process begun in March of activating four additional divisions. In late April and early May the Soviet Union provided Pyongyang with large quantities of arms and modern equipment; however, as events unfolded, the North Koreans did not have sufficient time to develop proficiency with the equipment.[52]

The North Korean buildup prior to the June offensive has been cited as evidence of Pyongyang's aggressive intent. Another hypothesis is that Kim Il Sung was responding to the military imbalance in the region created by Rhee and the United States. Certainly events in the South, i.e., the economic chaos, internal security problems with guerrillas, and Rhee's setback in the May 1950 elections suggested that the North could simply wait for the dissolution of South Korea. In fact, Kim Il Sung's actions following the May elections reflect a willingness to wait for Rhee's opponents to bring about the demise of the government.[53]

Peace Overtures and Storm Clouds

The May elections presented Rhee with a major political setback. Opponents of Rhee who had gained a majority in the National Assembly began denouncing Rhee and condemning the election as fraudulent. The National Assembly began denouncing Rhee and condemning the election as fraudulent. Following the election, Rhee appealed to the people in the North to support the unification of the nation by absorption into his regime.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid., 574-575.

He encouraged them to wait for, "unification through a joint struggle with us in the South. The longed-for day will come soon." Kim Il Sung must have interpreted these statements as further evidence of Rhee's aggressive intentions. In response, on June 3 Pyongyang transmitted a radio broadcast calling for peaceful unification. Several days later this proposal was followed by a specific plan for unity. The plan called for a meeting by all democratic parties (North and South) within ten days for the purpose of organizing a general election of a national legislature. This new legislature would then assemble in Seoul and administer the nation. In words reminiscent of the Soviet position during the Joint Commission talks, Pyongyang implied that "democratic" meant everyone but Rhee, his followers and the Right-wing parties. Thus Kim intended to peacefully unify the country by excluding non-Communist groups. On June 11 three North Korean representatives traveled to the South and presented the unity plan to all political parties except Rhee's. The representatives were captured by Rhee's constabulary and forced to broadcast fabricated renouncements of the plan– an act that infuriated the North. Rhee, in turn, countered with a proposal that the UN supervise elections in the North and that the elected officials be permitted a nominal role in the South Korean General Assembly.[54]

Following these events, North Korea began initiating a military operations time table while continuing to call for immediate negotiations between the two national assemblies to discuss unification. On June 15 North Korea moved its army towards the 38th parallel. On the eighteenth Pyongyang issued reconnaissance orders. Over the following weeks North Korea mobilized seven of the thirteen to fifteen divisions it would have in the field. On June 22 Pyongyang issued the operations order.[55]

In Seoul on June 18 John Foster Dulles delivered a speech to the opening session of the National Assembly. The speech was certainly viewed by the North Koreans as inflammatory and an omen for the future. Dulles reassured the legislators that, "You will never be alone so long as you continue to play worthily your part in the great design of human freedom." It is debatable whether Dulles intended for the speech to be a guarantee of US support in the event of a North Korean attack is debatable. Dulles later explained

[54] Ibid., 575.

[55] Ibid.

that the intent was to reassure Rhee that the US would respond without committing America to any particular course of action. Nevertheless, Rhee was encouraged by the speech. Following Dulles' speech Rhee declared that, "If we lose this cold war by default, we shall regain our freedom in the end by a hot war, regardless of cost."[56]

Summary

In the five years since the end of the war in the Pacific, US-Korean policy had undergone a transformation. Although the withdrawal of US forces was complete in 1949, America continued to play a central role in events below the 38th parallel. The reasons for this were twofold: the Rhee regime was dependent on US aid for its very existence, and the example with China revealed that even the US had a threshold for tolerance when dealing with corrupt and repressive rulers.[57]

Because the United States could exercise its influence over Rhee, e.g., economic aid and military assistance, America assumed a degree of responsibility in determining South Korea's future. From 1945 to 1948 the prevailing policy in Washington for involvement focused on Korea's strategic location vis-a-vis Japan and China. In this context, Korea's location was important to thwart Soviet operations into Japan and China. After 1948 political concerns determined Korean policy. Washington had become convinced that American prestige would suffer if the US failed to demonstrate its support for South Korea. Throughout this period, disagreements within the Truman Administration and higher global priorities, particularly Europe, suggested that the United States was incapable of developing a coherent Korean policy.[58]

Categorically, America's inconsistent efforts to support South Korea failed on two accounts. First, US support was insufficient to deter North Korea from launching its attack. Second, the South Koreans were unable to repel the attack because American aid had been inadequate and sporadic in the preceding years. From this perspective the success

[56] Ibid., 577.

[57] William W. Stueck, The Road to Confrontation: American Policy toward China and Korea, 1947-1950. (University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 153.

[58] Ibid., 110.

of US efforts was in pushing Pyongyang over the edge from subversive, guerrilla activity to open military aggression.[59]

To Kim Il Sung, the conditions in the South probably offered the best chance for exploitation and unification under his regime. He had been supporting guerrilla activities in the South for over three years, but the prospects for overthrowing Rhee through internal unrest were dismal. South Korea's economy remained in disrepair, however, a good rice harvest in 1949 suggested that a recovery was underway. Finally, Rhee's enlargement and rearmament of the armed forces must have alarmed Kim. The expansion of the air force was of particular concern. No doubt Pyongyang recognized that with each passing day its military superiority over the South was disappearing.[60]

Finally, it must be acknowledged that the Truman Administration succeeded in building an independent state in the South. However, its inability to develop and coordinate military strategy and foreign policy failed to convey a commitment to South Korea. The consequence was a conflict that would shape US-Asian policy for decades.[61]

[59] Ibid., 170.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid., 171.

CHAPTER IV

THE COLD WAR IN EUROPE: COLLABORATION TO CONTAINMENT

Events in Europe after 1945 were instrumental in shaping the western perception of the Kremlin's role in the Korean War. The United States and to a lesser extent Great Britain viewed the Soviet monolith as an expansionist power bent on extending its influence throughout the free world. By 1950, America had become obsessed with the threat of Communist domination and believed that Moscow orchestrated events on a global scale to further the advancement of Marxist-Lenin ideology.[1] According to President Truman, the United States had a moral obligation to act as the international leader in the fight against communism. On May 9, 1950, at Laramie, Wyoming, he defined communism as "a compound of evils," "the newest form of tyranny," and a "new powerful imperialism." In St. Louis, on June 10, he informed the American people that, "By means of infiltration, subversion, propaganda, and indirect aggression, the rulers of the Soviet Union have sought to extend their totalitarian control."[2] At Fulton, Missouri, in March 1946, Winston Churchill presaged Truman's sentiments in his famous "iron curtain" speech. Churchill argued that the Soviets did not desire a war, but instead wanted "the fruits of war and the indefinite expansion of their power and doctrines." In his view, American and British national security depended on an alliance of English-speaking countries to preserve the world order.[3]

The traditional western view of the origin and direction of the Cold War has been

---

[1] Peter Lowe, The Origins of the Korean War. (New York: Longman, Inc., 1986), 126.

[2] Glenn D. Paige, The Korean Decision. (New York: The Free Press, 1968), 52.

[3] John Spanier, American Foreign Policy Since World War II. (Washington: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1991), 32-33.

that it was a struggle against unprovoked aggression by the Soviet Union. Others argue that Soviet actions were a response to America's hostility towards the Soviet Union. These interpretations attempt to assign responsibility to one party rather than recognize that the Cold War was a contest between the United States and the Soviet Union intensified by ideological differences.[4] In the early stages of the Cold War three crucial East-West confrontations occurred that left indelible impressions on policy makers and would influence perceptions in Washington and Moscow on the origins of the war. These were in Iran (1946), in Greece and Turkey (1947-1948), and in Berlin (1948-1949).

Iran– The Soviets Push South

Historically, the Middle East had been the domain of the British and French colonial empires. During World War II, Iran became a major source of the oil for the Allies. Because American oil companies led the way in oil exploration in Iran, the United States began to establish an interest in the region. Understandably, an Anglo-American rivalry appeared that resulted not only in a confrontation with England, but, surprisingly, with the Soviet Union. As explained by Truman, the importance of Iran was access and control of its oil reserves. Western dependence on Iranian oil would have serious repercussions on the western economy and therefore, the West could not allow unilateral control.[5]

In 1941 the Great Powers– the US, UK, and USSR– occupied Iran primarily to protect their oil interests because Iran was pro-German. Affirming the temporary nature of this occupation, the allies agreed to withdraw all troops not later than six months following termination of the war, in other words, March 2, 1946. Also, England and the Soviet Union agreed to maintain existing oil concessions agreements with Iran; however, by 1944 all three powers were demanding concessions causing the Iranian parliament to freeze all concessions until the war ended.[6] On several occasions Roosevelt and Churchill attempted to assuage Stalin's concerns about the postwar settlement in Iran by assuring him that any

[4] Peter Lowe, The Origins of the Korean War. (New York: Longman, Inc., 1986), 128.

[5] Joyce and Gabriel Kolko, The Limits of Power. (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 236.

[6] Ibid.

agreement would protect Soviet interests in the region.[7]

By war's end, Iranian leaders had began making overtures to the United States in hopes of aligning themselves against the British and Russians. Washington welcomed the opportunity to establish ties with Iran for several reasons. First, maintaining a foothold in Iran would guarantee American oil concessions and prevent the Soviets from extending their influence over Iran. Second, losing Iran to the Soviets would likely threaten American oil holdings in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Kuwait.[8] Finally, the US suspected that the British were using them [the Americans] as an obstacle to frustrate and impede Soviet designs in Iran.[9] Thus, the United States proceeded to implement a course of action that furthered its own economic interests in a country where it had no history of involvement. Given the economic interests of the British and strategic interests of the Soviet Union, a confrontation over Iran was inevitable.

By 1946 the US and Britain had withdrawn their forces in accordance with the previous agreement; however, the Soviets procrastinated. In Moscow, in December 1946, at a special session of the Conference of Foreign Ministers [American, British, and Soviet only] Ernest Bevin queried the Soviets on why they insisted on retaining troops in Iran despite its wartime agreement to withdraw forces by March 1946. Stalin responded by explaining that the Soviet Union intended to thwart Iranian nationalist designs for incorporating Baku; the Iranian government was hostile to the USSR and there was nothing "friendly about it," and the Soviet-Iranian Treaty of 1921 gave Moscow the right to station troops in Northern Iran if conditions warranted it.[10] A more plausible explanation was that Stalin wanted to remain in a position to assist the Communist revolutionary provisional government that was demanding autonomy.[11] Unable to secure the removal of Soviet troops, Bevin proposed a time-consuming and ineffective three-power commission to investigate the conditions in Iran. The Americans refused to participate in the commission fearing a

[7] Walter LaFeber, America, Russia, and the Cold War: 1945-1980. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1980), 35.

[8] Harry S. Truman, Memoirs by Harry S. Truman. (New York: Doubleday, 1956), vol. II, 95.

[9] Joyce and Gabriel Kolko, The Limits of Power. (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 237.

[10] William Taubman, Stalin's American Policy. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1982), 125-126.

[11] Michael M. Boll, National Security Planning. (University Press of Kentucky, 1988), 43.

partition scheme that would permit British and Soviet troops to remain in Iran. Instead, US Ambassador to Iran, Wallace Murray, encouraged Iran's Premier Hakimi to take the issue to the UN where he would receive US backing.[12]

On January 19, Iran submitted the issue to the UN Security Council for resolution. To the Soviets, this act was a confirmation of their fears that the US was determined to make the UN an international forum subject to American influence. Moscow was convinced that the US had encouraged Iran to file charges. Having to defend its actions, the Soviets reacted by filing countercharges against the British for maintaining forces in Greece and Indonesia.[13] Furthermore, the Soviets announced that they would not participate in any discussions on the issue since it was not within the purview of the UN. Finally, the Soviets stated that they would not comply with any UN decisions concerning the Soviet-Iranian problem.[14]

On January 20 events took a fortuitous turn in favor of the Soviets. The Hakimi government fell and was replaced by a regime headed by Qavam Saltaneh. Qavam had a reputation of being friendly to the Soviets. Trygve Lie, Secretary General of the UN, had always maintained that the Soviets and Iranians could resolve the dispute through direct negotiations rather than within the UN. Accordingly, he encouraged Qavam to try and settle the issue with Moscow. Qavam traveled to Moscow on February 19 and met with Soviet officials until March 11. During the course of the negotiations, the Soviets changed their position on oil concessions. Instead of oil concessions, Moscow now preferred the formation of a joint company similar to the type being created in the East Europe. The Soviets envisioned owning 51 percent of the shares with Iran holding 49 percent. In addition, the Kremlin insisted on an autonomous status for Azerbaijan.[15]

March 2, the deadline for removing the Soviet forces, came and went. Russian soldiers remained in Iran. On March 4 Truman convened a conference to discuss the Iranian issue. Following the conference, he directed Secretary of State Byrnes to transmit a

[12] Joyce and Gabriel Kolko, The Limits of Power. (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 238.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Harry S. Truman, Memoirs by Harry S. Truman. (New York: Doubleday, 1956), vol. II, 94.

[15] Adam B. Ulam, Expansion and Coexistence. (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1968), 426-427.

message to Stalin expressing concern over the continuing occupation of Iran by the Soviet Union. The tone of the message was diplomatically polite, but reminded Stalin of his previous agreement under the Tripartite Treaty and concluded by appealing to him to withdraw his forces in the interest of international peace.[16]

Qavam and the Soviets failed to reach an agreement and on the fourteenth the US asked Lie to place the issue at the top of the Security Council agenda for the twenty-fifth. At the same time Truman instructed Byrnes to send Stalin another message strongly requesting the immediate withdrawal of Soviet forces from Iran. On the twenty-third Qavam requested that the UN delete the item from the UN agenda; however, the US insisted that the Security Council debate the Soviet-Iranian issue. Finally, on March 25 the Soviets announced the withdrawal of forces within six weeks.[17] Andrei Gromyko, Soviet representative at the UN, requested that in view of this agreement the Security Council withdraw the Iranian issue from the agenda. Byrnes, personally representing the US in New York, refused the request noting that Iran had not confirmed the agreement or whether the Soviets expected anything in return. Unable to get the issue removed from the agenda, Gromyko requested the Security Council postpone discussion until April 10.[18] In his memoirs, Gromyko explains that the western powers denied his request at which point, "I got up and left the session, the first time in the history of the United Nations that a representative of a powerful country walked out as a sign of protest.[19]

On April 4 the Soviet Union and Iran concluded an agreement that called for the withdrawal of Soviet forces. In exchange, the two countries would form a joint Iranian-Soviet oil company subject to ratification by the Iranian parliament. Finally, the Soviets agreed to consider the matter of Azerbaijan as an internal Iranian matter. The Soviets had gained a partial victory albeit short-lived. In the later part of 1946 Iranian nationalist suppressed members of the pro-Soviet Tudeh party and the parliament refused to ratify the oil agreement. In the words of a Soviet author, "To please the American and British 'protec-

[16] Harry S. Truman, Memoirs by Harry S. Truman. (New York: Doubleday, 1956), vol. II, 94-95.

[17] Joyce and Gabriel Kolko, The Limits of Power. (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 240.

[18] John L. Gaddis, The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 310.

[19] Andrei Gromyko, Memoirs. (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 237.

tors,' parliament [Iranian] on October 22, 1947, refused to ratify the agreement about the Soviet-Iranian Company for exploitation of oil in northern Iran."[20]

The role of the United States in the Soviet-Iranian imbroglio marked a turning point in American strategy towards the Soviet Union. From this point forward, Washington became convinced that the UN could better serve US interests so long as the membership remained amenable to American influence.[21] Truman, in particular, was infuriated by the blatant Soviet disregard for Iran's rights as a nation and the Kremlin's attempt to circumvent the United Nations. In his view, the Soviet setback gave the world confidence in the UN.[22] By electing to use the UN as the forum for arbitrating such disputes, Truman was subordinating traditional diplomacy to an international instrument. In this arena the US could chastise its opponents with impunity under the banner of world opinion.[23] Washington policymakers became convinced that Stalin and his associates were ideological zealots who considered conflict with the West as necessary to attain their objectives. In the future, America would continue to negotiate with Moscow, but any concessions would be forthcoming from the Soviets.[24]

While the West viewed Soviet expansionism with apprehension, the Soviets considered their actions as being consistent with long-term foreign policy goals. Certainly, in the case of Iran, the Soviets had expressed their ambitions during the war. From their perspective, the issue was that the allies were attempting to exclude the Soviet Union from an area long viewed as strategically important to national security. Finally, the actions of the allies during the war probably encouraged the Soviets to pursue their goals in Iran. To their astonishment, when they acted the allies intervened through the UN.[25]

---

[20] Adam B. Ulam, Expansion and Coexistence. (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1968), 427.

[21] Joyce and Gabriel Kolko, The Limits of Power. (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 241.

[22] Harry S. Truman, Memoirs by Harry S. Truman. (New York: Doubleday, 1956), vol. II, 96.

[23] Joyce and Gabriel Kolko, The Limits of Power. (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 241.

[24] John L. Gaddis, The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 313.

[25] Adam B. Ulam, Expansion and Coexistence. (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1968), 429.

Greece and Turkey– The Emergence of the Truman Doctrine

In January 1947, Britain's economic condition had reached a perilous state. Up to this point, the illusion had lingered that Britain could regain her place as a world power alongside the United States. Now, the cumulative effect of increasing debts from the dominion colonies, providing foreign assistance to struggling democracies, and maintaining a great navy and large standing army suggested that this goal was unrealistic. Furthermore, if the Labor government was going to improve the health and well being of the British people– something the people expected– London would have to cut its losses. It was becoming evident to the world that Britannia was too weak to resume her role as a great power.[26]

It was against this backdrop that on February 24, 1947, the British Ambassador informed Under Secretary of State Dean Acheson that the British would withdraw their army from Greece and discontinue economic aid to Greece and Turkey effective March 31. The situation in Turkey posed no immediate threat to the balance of power in the region; however, events in Greece indicated that the rebels backed by Albania, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria were about to overthrow the Rightist government. American policymakers viewed this situation as a significant threat to the regional balance of power.[27]

The State Department, operating with a renewed sense of purpose under George Marshall, considered the guerrillas and instrument of Soviet foreign policy and believed that the Greek situation, if unchecked, would result in similar crises in Turkey, Iran, Italy, and France. In other words, the Greek crisis had the potential of creating a "domino effect" in other areas.[28] In Acheson's opinion the issue was self-evident. As he later explained to members of Congress, "A Communist-dominated government in Greece would be considered dangerous to United States security." If the Soviet Union was allowed to predominate in the Mediterranean it would threat not only the security of America, but the entire Western

[26] D.F. Fleming, The Cold War and Its Origins, 1917-1960. (New York: Doubleday, 1961), vol. I, 438-439.

[27] John L. Gaddis, The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 348.

[28] Ibid.

world. Only America was capable of intervening to halt this threat.[29]

Truman concurred with these arguments. In fact, he had already reached the same conclusion in the preceding weeks. In his opinion, there was an interrelationship between Greece and Turkey. If Greece succumbed to communism, it would result in pulling the "iron curtain" across the eastern Mediterranean. Furthermore, Turkey would find itself surrounded by Soviet surrogates. Conversely, if Turkey fell to Soviet influence then Greece would find itself in an untenable situation. Greece and Turkey were free countries struggling for their liberty against internal and external communist threats. If help was not forthcoming, they would certainly become part of the Soviet orbit.[30]

More important, Truman believed that America had a moral obligation to support the cause of freedom. Our basic ideals and traditions demanded that we come to the aid of oppressed peoples. He recognized the inherent risks in such a deliberate confrontation; however, the consequences of failing to act were greater– the security of the nation and the free world were at stake. In his words, "Inaction, withdrawal to 'Fortress America' notions could result only in handing the Russians vast areas of the globe now denied to them."[31] The situation required decisive action and Truman, as always, would not shy away from decisionmaking.

Because recent elections had resulted in a Republican-controled Congress, Truman anticipated that an economy-minded Congress would be reluctant to approve this new commitment.[32] Accordingly, Truman invited a bipartisan group of congressional leaders to the White House on February 27 to receive a situation briefing on the Greek crisis. The presentation failed to convince the congressmen of the necessity of the commitment. Instead, they viewed Truman's proposal as an attempt to "pull British chestnuts out of the fire." At this point, Acheson requested permission to speak. Acheson began his plea by reviewing the historical framework that had divided the world between two ideologies. He continued

[29] Sir John Wheeler-Bennett and Anthony Nicholls, The Semblance of Peace: the Political Settlement after the Second World War. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1972), 565.

[30] Harry S. Truman, Memoirs by Harry S. Truman. (New York: Doubleday, 1956), vol. II, 100-101.

[31] Ibid., 102.

[32] D.F. Fleming, The Cold War and Its Origins, 1917-1960. (New York: Doubleday, 1961), vol. I, 440.

by linking the future of pro-Western governments in Europe with the future of Greece and Turkey. He concluded by asserting that the issue was more than merely rescuing the British, rather it was a decision that would have far reaching consequences on American security and the future resistance to Communist expansion.[33]

After a brief silence, Senator Vandenberg agreed that the world faced a crisis that only America could resolve. For this reason, he announced that he would support Truman's request under one condition– that the President explain to the Congress and the American people the reasons for this request.[34]

Armed with Vandenberg's conditional approval, the State Department began drafting Truman's speech for Congress and the nation. The strategy was to develop a series of press interviews, magazine and newspaper articles, and radio discussions to explain and win support for the aid request. While the majority of State planners supported the President's initiative, several officials objected to such as comprehensive, sweeping policy statement. George Elsey, an administrative assistant at the White House, observed that, "there has been no overt action in the immediate past by the USSR which serves as an adequate pretext for [an] 'All-out' speech."[35] George Kennan, the author of the "long telegram" and the foremost expert on the Soviet Union, believed that the ideological overtones of the policy were unnecessary. In his telegram Kennan had gone to great lengths to explain the origin and rationale for Soviet actions. He argued that whenever the Soviet Union met with strong resistance Moscow would withdraw rather than risk confrontation. For this reason, the strong ideological underpinnings were not necessary. In Kennan's opinion the President should explain that the request for aid to Greece and Turkey did not represent an all-encompassing strategy, but a response to a particular situation. Although he favored aid to Greece and Turkey, he objected to the suggestion of a universal policy wherein the United States would confront communist aggression worldwide.[36] In fact, the Administration never intended for this policy to address subsequent acts of communist ag-

[33] John L. Gaddis, The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 349.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid., 351.

[36] George F. Kennan, Memoirs: 1925-1950. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1967), 547-559.

gression on a global scale. Acheson, speaking before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on March 24, 1947, explained that the request pending before the Congress would not set a precedent for American policy, and that the White House would evaluate all requests for assistance in terms of whether the request is consistent with American foreign policy. Nevertheless, when Truman appeared before the Congress on March 12, 1947, he couched his request in ideological terms making the confrontation between the United States and Soviet Union the focal point of his address.[37]

Acheson's remarks to the contrary notwithstanding, several points about the Truman Doctrine warrant special emphasis because the policy was universal in scope, and more important, it signaled the advent of an anticommunist crusade that would influence the White House's perception of the Soviet Union's role in the Korean War. First, Soviet expansionism left the United States no alternative except to adopt a countervailing foreign policy. To be sure, Washington would have preferred to focus its efforts on domestic issues. The rapid demobilization of American armed forces and the retooling of industry to accommodate increasing demands for consumer goods attest to this fact. In foreign policy America had shifted from isolationism to internationalism. In large part, this was a result of the bipolar distribution of power between the United States and the Soviet union. In this situation, the assertiveness of one power requires a counteraction by the other in an attempt to maintain a level of security and power. Thus, while the United States desired to focus on domestic affairs, the Soviet Union's aggressiveness forced America to execute countermoves.[38]

Second, anticommunism was not the focal point of American foreign policy during or immediately after World War II. Previous discussion illustrated how FDR attempted to accommodate the Soviets on several issues in an attempt to formulate his new world order. In fact, an underlying goal of the United States was to assuage the Kremlin's fears of the West and establish the foundation for long-term cooperation between the wartime allies. On this issue, the public sentiments were firmly behind the Truman Administration. Again,

[37] John L. Gaddis, The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 351.

[38] John Spanier, American Foreign Policy Since World War II. (Washington: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1991), 42.

the rapid demobilization reflects the prevailing attitude that there was no threat in the immediate postwar period.[39]

For a year and a half after World War II the Americans had attempted to reconcile their differences with Moscow. The Soviets responded with denunciations and vilifications. Gradually, American opinion, at least officially, began to shift from amity to animosity. This was not the result of any deep-seated anticommunist ideology, but a desire to prevent the reoccurrence of circumstances during the pre-World War II period that resulted in one nation dominating Europe. To America this was not an ideological issue, nevertheless, there were ideological overtones.[40]

Third, the centrality of anticommunism in the Truman Doctrine was an attempt to solicit congressional and public support for a policy that the White House had decided upon.[41] As Clark Clifford explained, the Truman Doctrine was, "the opening gun in a campaign to bring people up to [the] realization that the war isn't over by any means." A State department official put the issue into context when he observed that, "the only way we can *sell* (italics added) the public on our new policy is by emphasizing the necessity of holding the line: communism vs. democracy should be the main theme."[42] Truman was aware of the isolationist sentiments in America. Following four years of war, Americans were preoccupied with personal interests. Nevertheless, he felt that only the US could meet Russia's challenge. In his opinion, America could not turn her back on the world.[43] The problem for the White House was how to convince the American public of the necessity of his foreign policy proposal. By portraying communism as the paramount evil threatening the world, Truman capitalized on the unique American perception of the world– that the world is divided into the extremes of good and evil. In this manner, he was able to gain public support for his program under the auspices of fighting for democracy and freedom.[44]

---

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid., 43.

[41] Ibid.

[42] John L. Gaddis, The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 350-351.

[43] Harry S. Truman, Memoirs by Harry S. Truman. (New York: Doubleday, 1956), vol. II, 102.

[44] John Spanier, American Foreign Policy Since World War II. (Washington: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1991), 44.

Finally, despite its implied universal application, American policymakers intended for the Truman Doctrine to be specific and limited, that is, situation dependent. Washington recognized that not every crisis was a threat to national security. The White House intended to apply Containment only where the Soviet Union appeared to be expanding its power.[45] Although the Truman Doctrine espoused democratic ideals, the fact that the test cases were Greece and Turkey, neither of which were democratic, reflects the true anticommunist, i.e., anti-Soviet, nature of the policy.

The European Response

The immediate reaction from European capitals was one of distress and apprehension. In Paris, diplomats viewed Truman's speech as confrontational and sure to provoke a showdown between the West and the Soviet Union. Ironically, Europeans accused the United States of embarking on a policy of imperialism. In London, the Labor Party expressed concern over the unilateral nature of the new policy rather than collective action that characterized the war years. The Manchester Guardian speculated on how Roosevelt would have handled the situation and then suggested that he would have attempted to resolve the crisis through the UN. Others accused the American public of exaggerating the Soviet threat. A majority of the Labor Party believed that the United States was, "dragging Great Britain into a ghastly showdown with Russia."[46] This observation was extremely accurate in describing America's near-paranoia with Communism. What Europe did not realize was that the source of this anxiety was the Truman Administration. As we have seen, in order to "sell" the American public on his new foreign policy, Truman had launched a campaign to make the public aware of the threat posed by the Soviet Union. As is so often the case when presented with the extremes of good and evil, Americans reacted with enthusiasm and zeal.

On April 7, 1947, the Cooperative Party of Great Britain, a major arm of the Labor Party, passed a resolution condemning the Truman Doctrine as a threat to world peace and,

---

[45] Ibid.

[46] D.F. Fleming, The Cold War and Its Origins, 1917-1960. (New York: Doubleday, 1961), vol. I, 448.

in effect, negating the sacrifices of the previous war. A survey of 38 European countries revealed that 82 percent regretted that the United States had not presented the issue to the UN for resolution. Charles DeGaulle called for European solidarity to balance the world's, "two enormous masses, both expanding."[47]

Undoubtedly, the European response perplexed the Truman Administration. From Washington's perspective, the Truman Doctrine was an attempt to fill the void left by the departure of the British from Greece and Turkey. If anything, the Europeans should have been grateful for the American initiative. The problem was essentially Washington's inability to appreciate the Euro-Soviet relationship. Because of geographic proximity, history, and centuries of interaction, Europeans appear less ideological in their dealings with the Soviet Union. This is a fundamental difference between dominant US and European views on how to deal with the Soviet Union. Europeans consider that they are going to have to live with the Soviet Union for an indefinite future in an up-and-down relationship of competition, friction, and some cooperation. Accordingly, Europe has tended to seek out economic and political solutions to resolve conflicts with the USSR. Conversely, the United States has favored a military or technological solution.[48] To Europeans, America's new foreign policy doctrine appeared ill-advised and reckless to the point of being provocative. Having endured the horrors of World War II, Europeans did not want to commit themselves to a policy that could escalate to World War III. In part, this may have been an expression of postwar weariness or a genuine desire to see the UN function as the intermediary as FDR and others envisioned in the new world order.

Doubt and Disapproval at Home

The Europeans were not alone in their uneasiness. The American public echoed Europe's anxiety over the implications of the Truman Doctrine. Among the comments of private citizens two were noteworthy. James P. Warburg, a banker and former deputy director of the Office of War Information, took issue with the Administration's assertion that the Soviet Union threatened world peace. He asked, "What is so urgent that we must act

[47] Ibid., 449.

[48] Jonathan Dean, Watershed in Europe. (Toronto: Lexington Books, 1987), 17.

alone, without consultation, without knowing how far our first step will carry us, and in such a way as to undermine the very structure of peace [the UN], which we have struggled so hard to erect?" Warburg raised the question of selectivity in implementing the Truman Doctrine. He argued that the nation had a right to know whether this policy would apply to all totalitarian regimes or only certain types. Perhaps he had the oppressive Greek and Turkish regimes in mind.[49]

A similar comment was made by Professor Gilbert Macbeth of Villa Nova College. He argued that the Truman Doctrine was undermining the UN. In his opinion, if we intended to continue our ideological struggle with the Soviet Union we had two choices: withdraw from the UN and pursue a unilateral course or transform the UN into an anticommunist world body. If the US was truly committed to promoting democracy, the focus should be on establishing the foundation for a democratic government rather than supporting reactionary governments simply because they oppose Communism. Macbeth also questioned whether communism was more distasteful than any other undemocratic regime. The focus of attention on communism was a deliberate attempt by the Truman Administration to obscure the real issue from the American people. In his opinion, "The bugaboo of communism had been conjured up to appeal to the emotions of the American people, rather than to their intelligence." The question, Macbeth claimed, was, "Should we oppose the interests of another great power in these two particular countries?" In his opinion, the potential advantages were doubtful.[50] Truman's speech, by creating an "either-or" challenge, interjected a degree of complexity into international relations that was almost unintelligible.[51]

The Significance of the "Mr. X" Article

In July 1947, George F. Kennan, the State Department's foremost Soviet expert, published an article under the pseudonym "Mr. X" entitled, "The Sources of Soviet

---

[49] Ibid., 453.

[50] Ibid., 454.

[51] Thomas G. Patterson. ed., Containment and the Cold War. (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1973), 10.

Conduct." In addition to explaining why the Russians act like Communists, the Truman Administration adopted the article as a means of explaining the purpose of its new policy. Kennan took exception to the traditional explanation that the Soviets based their foreign policy on the overarching goal of security. Instead, he claimed that Stalin based his policy on a combination of Marxist-Lenin ideology and a desire consolidate his power by using the threat of "capitalist encirclement." "Mr. X" believed Stalin would not deviate from his determination to overthrow the Western governments. For this reason, Soviet aggression could be, "contained by the adroit and vigilant application of counterforce at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points." In his opinion, the US should initiate this containment unilaterally until such time as the strain either broke-up the Soviet Party or resulted in a mellowing of Soviet power. The US could accomplish this without exposing the nation to economic or political hardship.[52]

The publication of the "Mr. X" article evoked a heated debate on the Cold War. Walter Lippmann, a leading journalist, did not accept the arguments for the Truman-Mr. X policy. In a series of newspaper articles later compiled into a book entitled, The Cold War. Mr. Lippmann attacks the Truman Doctrine on several accounts. First, he disagrees with Kennan's assessment of Soviet motivation. While ideology certainly influences Soviet foreign policy, Lippmann accuses Kennan of overlooking the fact that Stalin is heir to Peter the Great and the Czars of the Russians. In his opinion, Soviet expansion is more a product of traditional Russian insecurity than Communist ideology. Lippmann also criticized containment for its optimistic foundations. "Mr. X argues that the policy depends on internal deficiencies in the the Soviet system to ultimately bring about demise." Lippmann questioned the judgment of pursuing a policy that depends on a "best case" scenario. In his words, "There must be something deeply defective in Mr. X's estimates and calculations. For on his own showing, the policy cannot be made to work unless there are miracles and we get all the breaks."[53]

Lippmann outlined several consequences of implementing the Truman Doctrine.

---

[52] George F. Kennan, Memoirs: 1925-1950. (Boston: Little, Brown and Compnay, 1967), 566-582.

[53] Walter Lippmann, The Cold War: A Study in U.S. Foreign Policy. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947), 10-11.

First, it would commit the US to continuous intervention in countries under the auspices of "containing" the Soviet Union. Second, echoing the sentiments of Europe and others, the policy threatened to destroy the UN or at least transform it into a useless anti-Soviet world body. Finally, Lippmann warned that the policy would relinquish the initiative to the Soviets allowing them to determine when, where, and under what conditions they would confront the US.[54] Lippmann believed the tragedy of the Truman Doctrine was that it accepted the inevitability of conflict with the Soviet Union. He believed this conclusion overlooked the importance of diplomacy in resolving issues between rival powers.[55] Although Lippmann's analysis had merit, especially his interpretation of the role of insecurity in determining Soviet actions, he failed to persuade the Administration. What Lippmann failed to recognize was that Kennan had made similar arguments in his article, but the White House had misinterpreted the text. Truman had decided upon a course of action that would divide the world into two powerful halves.

The Soviet Perspective

Viewed objectively, the allies *should not have* been surprised by Soviet moves towards Turkey since they reflected a traditional Russian foreign policy goal. No doubt Stalin felt that he and Molotov had expressed their desires on a postwar settlement during the Great Power conferences and, in their opinion, they had received encouraging responses from the Western allies.[56] Prior to Potsdam, the Soviet Union renewed its demand for access to the Mediterranean– a traditional Czarist goal. In addition to demanding that Turkey return parts of Armenia and Georgia, Stalin expected a dominant voice in the administration of the Turkish straits and a base there or on the Dardanelles. The reasons for these demands were twofold: it would provide the Black Sea Fleet access to the Mediterranean, and it would reduce the risk of an enemy landing a force in the Black Sea

[54] George F. Kennan, Memoirs: 1925-1950. (Boston: Little, Brown and Compnay, 1967), 566-582.

[55] Walter Lippmann. The Cold War: A Study in U.S. Foreign Policy. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947), 60-61.

[56] Adam B. Ulam, Expansion and Coexistence. (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1968), 429.

region.[57] No doubt Churchill felt somewhat responsible for encouraging the Soviets since he had made a remark at Teheran that the Soviets deserved a base in the area.[58]

In Moscow's opinion, the demands on Turkey were reasonable and justified. The Soviets claimed territory that had been theirs between 1878 and Brest Litovsk: the districts of Ardahan and Kars. The Kremlin cited a similar concession by Rumania (Bessarabia) that the allies approved. Although Rumania had been an enemy, the Soviets viewed Turkey's attitude towards Russia during the German invasion as less than friendly and therefore parallel to the Rumanian concession.[59] In addition, Stalin cited the American and British domination of the Panama and Suez Canals as reasons to grant the Soviets their "fair share". Certainly, the Western refusal to grant the Soviets access to the Mediterranean appeared to be a double standard and no doubt infuriated Stalin.[60]

The Western rejection of Soviet demands did not dissuade Stalin from his objective. He knew that in the past the decline of one imperial power resulted in the rise of another. For this reason, Stalin could reasonably assume that Britain's departure from the Mediterranean would permit him to fill the vacuum in the region. Under these circumstances, the region appeared full of opportunities for Soviet expansion. Believing that Turkey was not that important to the US, it must have been bewildering to Stalin when Truman announced his policy.[61]

In the case of Greece, Stalin adopted a more distant, indirect approach. From 1944, Stalin conceded that Greece fell within the Western sphere of influence. This was confirmed in 1948 when he told Djilas that, "The uprising in Greece has to foldup. . . . they have no prospect of success at all. What do you think, that Great Britain and the United States– the United States, the most powerful state in the world– will permit you to break their lines of communications in the Mediterranean Sea. The uprising in Greece must

[57] Strobe Talbott, Krushchev Remembers. (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1974), 227.

[58] Charles E. Bohlen, Witness to History. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1973), 235.

[59] Adam B. Ulam, Expansion and Coexistence. (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1968), 430-431.

[60] William Taubman, Stalin's American Policy. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1982), 111.

[61] Adam B. Ulam, Expansion and Coexistence. (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1968), 431.

be stopped, and as quickly as possible."[62] In fact, there is no evidence of direct Soviet involvement in the Greek civil war. To the contrary, the Kremlin urged the Greek Communists and their Yugoslav allies to settle the issue for fear of drawing the United States into the Mediterranean.[63]

Though Stalin's policy in Greece was cautious and measured, his anti-Western propaganda served to encourage the Greek Communists to fight. One reason for this practice may have been an attempt to placate the more radical international Communists who were impatient with Soviet restraint. As a consequence, the Americans assumed that Moscow was behind the Greek Communists.[64] Djilas suggests it was not in Stalin's interest to create another Communist state in the Balkans. By supporting the Greek Communists, Stalin would run the risk of creating another Communist state when existing ones were not subservient to Moscow. Furthermore, the international situation threatened to drag the Soviet Union into a war with the potential of losing their already-won positions.[65] Stalin had come to distrust independent Communist states especially the larger more independent-minded such as Yugoslavia. To control these regimes, it was necessary to have the Red Army exert its influence both directly and as the patron of the Communist state's armed forces. In the case of Greece, this was not possible.[66]

Djilas's theory is significant since it suggests that Stalin based his foreign policy less on ideology and more on the traditional national interests of the Soviet Union. Even after Truman proclaimed his doctrine, Stalin was prepared to continue detente with the United States. Perhaps this is because Stalin refused to believe that Truman's anti-Communist rhetoric was anything other than propaganda. Apparently, he was oblivious to the fact that America was announcing the beginning of the Cold War.[67] This is understandable when you review Stalin's comments on the struggle between capitalism and communism. Stalin went to great lengths to emphasize that there was no conflict between the

[62] Milovan Djilas, Conversations with Stalin. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962), 181-182.

[63] Thomas G. Paterson, Meeting the Communist Threat. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 50.

[64] William Taubman, Stalin's American Policy. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1982), 150.

[65] Milovan Djila, Conversations with Stalin. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962), 182-183.

[66] Robert H. McNeal, Stalin: Man and Ruler. (New York University Press, 1988), 285.

[67] William Taubman, Stalin's American Policy. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1982), 151.

Soviet Union and capitalist countries on ideological grounds. Instead, he viewed the systems in economic terms. In 1946, he told Alexander Werth that it was possible for one country to be Communist and another to be capitalist and that the possibilities for peaceful cooperation were increasing.[68] It is questionable whether Stalin actually believed this. At a minimum, such a belief would have been conditional– that the capitalist country did not present an immediate threat to the security of the Soviet Union and perhaps more important, that the Soviet Union benefited from the relationship. Stalin's dissolution of the Comintern in 1943 in the interest of improving solidarity among the allies reveals that he was willing to subordinate communism to enhance security whenever the need arose.

In sharp contrast, the Truman Doctrine emphasized the ideological differences between the two systems. Furthermore, Truman believed that political and economic systems were indivisible. Speaking at Baylor University in Waco, Texas shortly after his 12 March speech he explained, "We cannot say that we are willing to cooperate in one field and are unwilling to cooperate in another."[69] Clearly, Truman and Stalin held different perceptions on the origins of the conflict.

The inflammatory language of the Truman Doctrine convinced the American public that the Soviet Union was an unrelenting aggressor determined to undermine fledgling democracies and that only the United States could stem the tide. Having established containment on the periphery, it was time to shift the focus to the European Continent.

There was a certain amount of tension over t 's decision, but not because proponents of the policy did not consider Europe the main agenda. The conflict arose over limiting the scope of the Truman Doctrine. Administration officials such as Acheson and Forrestal and congressional leaders like Vandenberg urged the President to attack communism on all fronts, especially in Asia where the situation was as great as that experienced during World War II.

[68] Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers (1946): The Conference of Berlin, VI, 734-5.

[69] Harry S. Truman, Memoirs by Harry S. Truman. (New York: Doubleday, 1956), vol. II, 111.

Korea and the Truman Doctrine

In developing the specific language for the Truman Doctrine, members of the Administration such as Kennan and others had recommended to the President that he refrain from generalities. Their concern was that the American public and Congress would interpret the policy as being an all encompassing global commitment to meet Communist aggression everywhere. Despite these warnings, the announcement was extremely vague. As a consequence, the White House found itself in the unenviable position of trying to explain inconsistencies between its policy in Europe and Asia.

As we have seen, the beginning of 1947 ushered in a change in US-Korean policy. The central issue was whether Korea was critical to US strategic interests or was one area that America could abandon. The JCS believed that withdrawing from Korea would pose not significant threat to MacArthur's Far East Command. John Allison, a State Department planner, argued that the US needed to continue supporting South Korea for several reasons. First, the United States had made a commitment to establish an independent and unified Korea. Second, withdrawing would result in a loss of "prestige" for America in its contest with the Soviet Union. Finally, withdrawing would send the message to Greece and Turkey that the US was not committed to their struggle. This is questionable given the fact that the US was attempting to "cut its losses" in Korea rather than provide support to the Rhee regime under the Truman Doctrine.

Although Korea continued to receive US economic and military assistance, the Truman Administration never cited the Truman Doctrine, directly or by implication, as the justification for this aid. The exact reason for this remains unclear. Certainly the KCP activities in the South would have met the criteria under the Truman Doctrine. Also, the recalcitrant, obstructionist attitude of the Soviets in the Joint Commission would have suggested that Moscow was influencing the KCP through Pyongyang. Perhaps the Administration, faced with budgetary constraints and focused on Greece and Turkey, felt that including Korea would jeopardize White House plans. Furthermore, Japan was more important than Korea in terms of limiting Soviet expansion in the Far East. Finally, Truman could argue, and did, that China was receiving large amounts of aid in an attempt

to thwart Mao and the Communists. Certainly, support to Chiang illustrated that the Truman Doctrine was applicable in Asia. In Asia, unlike Europe, Truman was implementing his policy as he envisioned– on a case by case basis. Korea would not meet the criteria outlined in the Truman Doctrine until 1950.

The Berlin Crisis

The Berlin crisis of 1948-49 was perhaps the most dangerous threat to world peace prior to the Korean War. In terms of its affect on US-Soviet relations, the crisis served to confirm Washington's view of the Soviet Union as an unrestrained aggressor. A detailed discussion of Soviet-American diplomacy on Germany during the period 1945-1948 is beyond the scope of this study. Suffice it to say that what little evidence is available suggests that Soviet policymakers were uncertain what direction their German policy should take. On the one hand, the Soviets were determined to punish Germany for the destruction it inflicted. Conversely, there was a feeling that Germany, as the key to Europe and the home of Marxism, should be won over into the Soviet camp. The result was ambivalence towards Germany's future.[70]

In late 1947 the Soviets still viewed the threat from America as being indirect and distant. Loathing a direct military confrontation with the Soviet Union, the Truman Doctrine would contain the Soviet Union indirectly through economic and military assistance. To the Russians, the real threat would be a unified and economically rehabilitated West Germany. Such a Germany would be able to industrialize and rearm itself. In the Soviet view, it was critical that Germany not achieve this status.[71]

The issue that prompted the breakdown of discussions between the Soviet Union and the Western allies was currency reform. By late 1947 negotiations between the Russians and Western Allies over the future of Germany had come to a standstill. Both sides began to focus on developing their part of Germany. In February, 1948, the Foreign Ministers of the Western Allies reached decisions on Germany: the Allies would combine

[70] Charles E. Bohlen, Witness to History. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1973), 274.

[71] Adam B. Ulam, Expansion and Coexistence. (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1968). 450-451.

their occupation zones; coordinate economic policies to revive the economy by implementing currency reform, and move towards writing a constitution leading towards the Federal Republic.[72] The Soviets viewed this as a threat believing that the Allies would dump the worthless marks in their zone. More important, the currency reform was a harbinger of the revitalization of Germany and ultimately the formation of a German army. As Kennan explained, "There can be no doubt that, coming as it did on top of the European recovery program (the Marshall Plan) and the final elaboration and acceptance of the Atlantic alliance, the move toward establishment of a separate government in Western Germany aroused keen alarm among the Soviet leaders."[73]

On June 23, the West announced the introduction of a new currency in Berlin. Stalin responded immediately by severing ground and waterway transportation into Berlin. Stalin argued that the West had obviously abandoned the idea of unifying Germany, therefore, there was no purpose in maintaining Berlin as the future capital of Germany. Accordingly, the Western powers should withdraw to their own zones. The Western allies replied on July 6 demanding that Moscow recognize the rights of Berlin. In addition, they proposed the four powers meet to discuss the crisis.[74]

This request shifted the initiative to Stalin. Stalin's goal was not to evict the Western powers from Berlin, but to prevent the formation of the Federal Republic of Germany. Faced with this impending realization, he chose the currency reform issue as the pretext for the blockade. The blockade, he believed, would stall the implementation of the London decisions. On August 2, he agreed to meet with the Western powers, provided the negotiations did not require the fulfillment of any preliminary conditions (in other words, the blockade would remain in place during the talks), and that the four-powers agree to discuss Berlin within the context of the German question.[75]

Stalin's initial response to Truman's personal representative, Ambassador Bedell Smith, was encouraging. Stalin admitted that the Berlin issues were insignificant and that

---

[72] Russell D. Buhite, Soviet-American Relations in Asia, 1945-1954. (University of Oklahoma Press, 1981), 224.

[73] Stephen E. Ambrose, Rise to Globalism. London: Penguin Press, 1971), 172.

[74] Ibid.

[75] William Taubman, Stalin's America Policy. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1982), 191.

his primary concern was the future of a united Germany. He proposed a CFM meeting to address the questions of reparations, demilitarization of Germany, the formation of a German government and a German peace treaty. To spare all parties any embarrassment, he suggested that the Western powers could handle the "London problem" confidentially in an oral agreement. Smith advised Stalin that the United States would not negotiate under duress. At this point, Stalin became very accommodating and even offered concessions, albeit insignificant, in an attempt to resolve the issue. In each case the proposals were unacceptable to the West. The discussions continued into August with little success. Neither side demonstrated a willingness to make meaningful concessions, nevertheless, they were unwilling to go to war over the blockade. In the absence of an agreement, Stalin elected to leave the blockade in place and let events take their course.[76]

Truman reacted to the Berlin crisis in characteristic fashion. Brushing aside recommendations to acquiesce to Soviet demands, he stated that, "We were going to stay, period." He felt strongly that the United States was in Berlin by virtue of an agreement and that the Russians had no authority to impose a blockade. Rather than risk a confrontation that could escalate to war, Truman decided to resupply Berlin through airlift using the air corridors designated in an agreement with the Soviets reached on November 30, 1945.[77]

By the end of 1948 the Truman Administration had turned the Berlin crisis into a political success for several reasons. First, the effects of the Western counterblockade had aroused latent German non-Communist animosity towards the Soviets. Second, the crisis closed the door on the issue of unifying Germany. Spiritually and economically divided, the Western powers began taking steps to merge the West German zones. Most important, the crisis lent justification to Truman's assessment of the Soviet threat as articulated in the Truman Doctrine. In fact, the blockade served the West so well that certain officials suggested prolonging the crisis to help expedite passage of nation security-related legislation.[78]

The USSR had retreated again and again from previous positions in an attempt to extricate itself from this situation. Not only was the counterblockade inflicting hardship on

---

[76] Ibid., 192.

[77] Russell D. Buhite, Soviet-American Relations in Asia, 1945-1954. (University of Oklahoma Press, 1981), 225.

[78] Joyce and Gabriel Kolko, The Limits of Power. (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 496.

East Germany, but America was using the crisis to justify a military rearmament program. On 4 May the United States and the Soviet Union announced that Moscow would unconditionally lift the blockade on 12 May and that the CFM would meet in Paris on May 23 to consider the outstanding issues relating to Germany. The USSR had suffered an ignominous defeat; the Truman Doctrine had contained communism.[79]

The Truman Doctrine and McCarthyism

As we have seen, the Truman Doctrine was very effective in manipulating public opinion in a manner supportive of the Administration's foreign policy. The most effective technique was the use of propaganda to interpret international events primarily in the terminology of this doctrine. The unrealized goals of Roosevelt for a new world order, events in eastern Europe, e.g., Czechoslovakia, Europe's economic plight, and the recent Berlin crisis– all were disappointments due to Soviet obstructionism and aggression. It was communist subversion that was responsible for these failures. To reinforce this argument, the White House sponsored numerous speaking tours to support this campaign. At the same time, the Justice Department initiated three programs designed to identify American subversives: the Federal Employee Loyalty Program, the Attorney General's list, and a drive to report subversive aliens. Simultaneously, the Congress began hearings on subversive activities while the Justice Department implemented a great patriotic campaign designed to elevate the Truman Doctrine to the status afforded the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.[80] The overriding goal was to keep the public focused on the issue of anti-communism. Because the basis of the Truman Doctrine was an anti-communist ideology, Acheson's congressional testimony to the contrary, there was a requirement to remind the American public constantly of the ever-present threat.

This does not imply that the Truman Doctrine was a distortion of American foreign policy. I am convinced that President Truman believed that the USSR was committed to an expansionist policy in western Europe and the Balkans. It is also reasonable to assume that

---

[79] Ibid., 497.

[80] Richard M. Freeland, The Truman Doctrine and the Origins of McCarthyism. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), 9-10.

he and his lieutenants abhorred communism and believed that only the exigencies of the situation would compel a nation to accept totalitarianism. In this context, the Truman Doctrine reflected American foreign policy.

In the near-term the propaganda campaign to win public support for the Truman Doctrine was successful. However, this exaggerated representation of the Soviet Union and the inherent dangers of global communism resulted in repercussions not anticipated by the Administration. The Truman Doctrine and the vigorous anti-Communist campaign convinced the American public that the United States was threatened by an ideological monolith that threatened traditional American values. As a consequence, the public began to overreact to such events as the Soviet explosion of the atomic bomb, the fall of Chiang in China, and most important in the context of this study, the Korean War. It was these perceived failures that gave opponents of the Truman Administration, most notably Senator McCarthy, the opportunity to turn the anti-Communist campaign against the White House.

Ironically, McCarthyism was a reversal of fortune for the Truman Administration. Since March of 1947, Truman had pursued a campaign designed to "scare the hell out of the American people" in order to gain support for his foreign policy. Now, he was reaping the fruits of his labor. There was a certain appeal to McCarthyism primarily because it offered an explanation for America's failures in the Cold War. In McCarthy's opinion, the solution was simple– root out the disloyal subversives in the State Department responsible for America's foreign policy.[81]

In an atmosphere of near hysteria, the Truman Administration was under extreme pressure to develop a comprehensive program that would placate the public. Clearly, Truman faced a dilemma. Congress remained budget-minded; the Soviets possessed the bomb; the US had virtually no ground forces; China had fallen to Mao's Communists; and Secretary of Defense Johnson was in the process of 'cutting the fat' from the defense budget.[82] Truman recognized that his foreign policy was at a crossroads. The American public was demanding that actions support his foreign policy. Korea would provide Truman the opportunity to restore public confidence and credibility in his foreign policy.

[81] Stephen E. Ambrose, Rise to Globalism. (London: Penguin Press, 1971), 186-187.

[82] Ibid., 188.

N.S.C. 68– Codifying the Cold War

In January 1950, Truman responded to this criticism by directing the State and Defense Departments to conduct a review of American foreign policy in the light of recent events, i.e., the Soviet explosion of the atomic bomb, the Czechoslovakian coup attempt, the Berlin crisis, etc. No doubt Truman wanted disparately to formulate a comprehensive strategy that would support his policies and quiet the opposition.

In April the State-Defense committee forwarded its report to the National Security Council for review. The final product, known as NSC 68, continued the practice of overstating the Soviet threat to gain congressional support for Truman's aid programs. The document was provocative and militaristic. Kennan, Bohlen and others argued against the over-emphasis on military options that suggested war with the Soviet Union was inevitable.

Unlike the Truman Doctrine that addressed the threat in general terms, NSC 68 focused specifically on the USSR. Concerning Soviet intentions, the document stated that the USSR sought "to impose its absolute authority over the rest of the world"; that goal required "the ultimate elimination of any effective opposition to [Soviet] authority"; that, in turn, demanded "the complete subversion or forcible destruction of the machinery of government and structure of society in the countries of the non-Soviet world and their replacement by an apparatus and structure subservient to and controlled from the Kremlin."[83]

NSC 68 continued with an assessment of Soviet capabilities: "No other value system is so implacable in its purpose to destroy us, so capable of turning to its own uses the most dangerous and divisive trends in our society, no other so skillfully and powerfully evokes the elements of irrationality in human nature everywhere, and no other has the support of a great and growing center of military power." Presaging an observation made a generation later, NSC 68 claimed that the Soviet Union possessed armed forces far in excess of those required for national defense. It was this military capability, the document argued, that posed the greatest threat to America and the free world. Should war come in 1950, the Soviets had the capability to overrun West Europe, the near and Middle East, consolidate Communist gains in the Far East, and attack Canada and the United States with atomic

[83] William Taubman, Stalin's American Policy, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1982), 199.

weapons. This last hypothesis formed the basis for the report's doomsday prediction: "If it is assumed that [the Soviet Union] will strike a strong surprise blow, and if it further assumed that its atomic attacks will be met with no more effective defense opposition than the United States and its allies have programmed, results of those attacks could include: (a) Laying waste the British Isles; . . . (b) Destruction of vital centers . . . of Western Europe; . . . (c) Delivering devastating attacks on certain vital centers of the United States and Canada." The NSC planners, particularly Paul Nitze, believed that expediency rather than the level of the aggression determined the Kremlin's actions. For this reason, NSC 68 placed great emphasis on the possibility of a surprise attack against the United States.[84]

Given this situation, NSC 68 proposed four courses of action: continuing current policies without strengthening America's capabilities or reducing its commitments; conducting a preventive war against the Soviet Union; returning to an isolationist policy by withdrawing from Europe; and developing the free world military capabilities to counter the Soviets.[85]

The first course of action was unacceptable in light of recent Communist aggression. Current military spending and capabilities had been insufficient to deter this aggression. Conversely, Soviet expenditures were increasing at an alarming rate. If the US continued business as usual it would experience a relative decline in its capabilities vis-a-vis the Soviet Union.[86] Furthermore, reducing American commitments was not an option under the Truman Doctrine.

The second alternative conflicted with traditional American values. In addition, there was no guarantee of success, since the Red Army would likely overrun West Europe leading to a lengthy war of attrition.[87]

The third alternative was even less attractive; it would return the nation to the prre-war period of isolationism. While some might entertain this option, it would likely lead to Soviet expansion in Europe and Asia as a consequence of our withdrawal. In the words of

---

[84] Ibid., 200.

[85] Gregg Herken, The Winning Weapon. (Princeton University Press, 1981), 327.

[86] Michael M. Boll, National Security Planning, (University of Kentucky Press, 1988), 75.

[87] Ibid., 76.

NSC 68, "There is no way to make ourselves inoffensive to the Kremlin except by complete submission to its will." If the US decided to pursue this course of action, the result would be to capitulation or to fight alone against a superior opponent.[88]

Having discounted the first three alternatives, NSC 68 recommended adoption of the fourth course of action. This alternative recommended actions that covered the entire spectrum of foreign policy actions: a rapid buildup of the armed forces and economic aid to our allies to assist in resisting Communist aggression. The fourth option also recommended implementing psychological programs in an attempt to undermine the Soviet leadership and convince the American public about the seriousness of the threat. The later was basically a continuation of the propaganda program implemented during the formative period of the Truman Doctrine. To execute the psychological programs, NSC 68 recommended the establishment of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty and expansion of intelligence gathering capabilities.

NSC 68 concluded by making several remarkable recommendations. First, the US should discontinue negotiating with the Soviets since the Kremlin was not presently disposed to change its policies. Second, the US should develop the hydrogen bomb to offset Soviet possession of an atomic arsenal by 1954. Third, to preclude sole reliance on atomic weapons, NSC 68 recommended a rapid expansion of conventional armed forces. Next, the Administration should propose an increase in taxes to fund this rearmament. Recognizing the political implications of such proposals, the document proposed that the government "mobilize" the public to build a consensus on the urgency of the situation. Meeting the Soviet threat would require unity of effort by America and her allies. Accordingly, NSC 68 recommended the US take the lead in directing a strong alliance system (presumably NATO). Finally, the US should take the fight to the Soviets by making the Russian citizens our allies in this struggle.[89]

In the spring of 1950 the National Security Council presented the document to President Truman for consideration. The authors intentionally omitted the cost estimates

---

[88] Ibid.

[89] Walter LaFeber, America, Russia, and the Cold War: 1945-1980. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1980), 99.

for implementation of the program. Truman, always concerned about the budget, asked for this information. Acheson confided privately that the cost could be as much as $50 billion.[90] Truman recognized that NSC 68 'meant a great military effort in time of peace. It meant doubling or tripling the budget, increasing taxes heavily, and imposing various kinds of economic controls. It meant a great change in our normal peacetime way of doing things.' Because of its implications and the upcoming Congressional elections, he made no final comments on the document. Whether Truman would have implemented NSC 68 in the absence of other events is uncertain. What is known is that Truman believed that the Soviets were encouraging the North Koreans. Without question, he seized this opportunity to justify the implementation of NSC 68.[91] As Acheson later recalled, "It is doubtful whether anything like what happened in the next few years could have been done had not the Russians been stupid enough to have instigated the attack against South Korea and opened the 'hate America' campaign."[92]

NSC 68 was the logical extension of the Truman Doctrine. Whereas the Truman Doctrine had addressed the threat of communism on a global basis, NSC 68 prescribed specific measures to counter Soviet aggression. It made the assumption that whenever the West lost a position of influence, whether it be basing rights or a colony that was experiencing national liberation, the Soviet Union was responsible. Theoretically, this suggested that all change, except that favorable to the West, was unacceptable. In the opinion of the Administration, there was an international Communist conspiracy directing political and social change– the head of this conspiracy was the Soviet Union.

[90] Michael M. Boll, National Security Planning, (University of Kentucky Press, 1988), 77.

[91] Stephen E. Ambrose, Rise to Globalism, (London: Penguin Press, 1971), 191.

[92] Michael M. Boll, National Security Planning, (University of Kentucky Press, 1988), 77.

CHAPTER IV

NORTH KOREA: BETWEEN MOSCOW AND PEKING

"The Soviet objective in Korea is to dominate the entire country through its unification under a Communist-controlled native regime and the withdrawal of occupation forces. Unable to accomplish this through the Joint Commission, the Soviets have sought to consolidate their position in the North and prevent the establishment of a durable democratic regime in the South."[1]

The traditional view of Soviet-North Korean relations, vis-a-vis the Korean War, has been that Kim Il Sung was either a puppet or an impostor who owed his position to Moscow. The Western argument has been that Kremlin involvement in planning the Korean War was part of a larger expansionist plan whereby Stalin exerted influence and control over foreign Communist governments. This position is consistent with Cold War rhetoric that portrayed the Soviet Union as the Communist monolith that directed all activities of its surrogate regimes. In the case of Kim Il Sung and North Korea, this view overlooks the significance of limited Soviet goals in Korea, the existence of a close Sino-North Korea relationship, and the strong nationalist movement in Korea. In truth, although Soviet support was the vital factor in Kim Il Sung's rise to power, Kim owed sole allegiance to no patron. At best, the relationship between Moscow and Pyongyang was a reluctant partnership between two equally distrustful associates. Conversely, the Sino-North Korea relationship, albeit less defined, was much more constructive.

As mentioned, Kim understood that Soviet support was critical to his accession to power. However, because of Moscow's vacillating assistance during the period immediate-

[1] Vandenburg to Truman, October 30, 1946, Box 243, Intelligence File, President's Secretary File, Truman Papers.

ly following World War II, he also recognized the need to lessen Soviet influence and compromise with other indigenous political groups in order to increase his leverage. Kim learned early that his future success would depend on walking a tightrope between maintaining Soviet support and recognizing the nationalistic demands of the people for an independent, unified Korea.

Both during and after Soviet occupation, Kim continued to reassure his countrymen that, "we must have a firm determination to rehabilitate and develop the national economy and build a rich and powerful country by our own efforts, without seeking to rely entirely on others." Focusing on Soviet extraction and removal of raw materials, a major grievance of the people, Kim asserted that, "We should not send out to foreign countries the raw materials which we extract from the abundant domestic sources, as in the bygone days of Japanese rule, but should proceed in the direction of processing all of them at home to produce finished goods."[2] To this end, Kim constantly proclaimed a policy of self-reliance and promised that Soviet occupation forces would not remain in North Korea. As a result of his political finesse, Kim was able to gain the continued support of Moscow while building his political support base among the people by keying on the nationalistic goal of unification.

North Korea and China: The Other Link

Although the Soviet Union maintained a strong influence over North Korea, beginning in 1949, Peking and Pyongyang began to develop close ties that have remained, until recently, relatively obscure. There are several reasons for this: the North Koreans wanted to maintain the legend of Kim's struggle against the Japanese; the Soviets wanted to minimize Chinese influence in North Korea; and the Americans perceived the Soviets as a monolith responsible for the Korean War.[3] In fact, CIA reports on Korea during the period 1948-1950, make no reference to improving Sino-North Korea relations. Instead, the

[2] Robert R. Simmons, The Strained Alliance: Peking, Pyongyang, Moscow and the Politics of the Korean Civil War. (New York: The Free Press, 1975), 29-30.

[3] Bruce Cumings, The Origins of the Korean War, vol. II. (Princeton University Press, 1990), 350-351.

focus is on the continuing influence of the Soviet Union over the Pyongyang regime.[4]

There were several reasons for the close ties between Peking and Pyongyang. First, Kim had started his revolutionary activities with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). For this reason, he probably felt close to them, especially ideologically. No doubt, the fact that large numbers of Korean soldiers were fighting with the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) combined with Chinese expressions of affection for North Korea served to reinforce this affinity. Second, history had taught Kim not to rely exclusively on one foreign power for support. Drawing on his experience with Moscow during the inter-war years, Kim probably saw an advantage in playing the "China-card," similar to America in the 1970s, as a method of offsetting Soviet influence by threatening to lean towards Peking. Finally, and this is the most speculative of the reasons, the factor of race and China's historical ties and interest in Korea may have caused Kim to prefer a closer relationship with Peking than Moscow.

Collectively, these factors fostered a strong relationship between the two countries that took an unexpected turn in 1949. According to the Chinese Nationalists, Peking and Pyongyang signed a bilateral defense pact on March 18, 1949, in Moscow under the watchful eye of Stalin. The operational language of the pact stated that each side had a responsibility for the common defense from any kind of invasion.[5] Accepting the validity of this agreement, the obvious question then, in view of the western belief of Soviet domination over North Korea, is why Kim Il Sung would sign a defense pact with China rather than with his mentors and supporters, the Russians? More important, why would Stalin consent to such an agreement?

Perhaps the most convincing evidence of the Sino-North Korea relationship is the recent selected publication of Mao Tse-Tung's correspondence with Stalin during the Korean War. Mao's telegram to Stalin in October 1950, clearly reveals that the Chinese leader's decision to enter the war was not a result of Stalin's influence; rather, it was a result of this relationship. To the contrary, Stalin refused to provide Mao air support and

[4] Central Intelligence Agency, Prospects for Survival of the Republic of Korea and Consequences of US Troop Withdrawal from Korea in Spring, 1949. Box 243, Intelligence File, President's Secretary File, Truman Papers.

[5] "China Reds Reported in North Korea Pact," New York Times, 6 May 1949, 7.

supplies. Nevertheless, after deliberation in the Chinese Politburo, Mao elected to intervene on North Korea's behalf.[6] The West long maintained that China's entry into the War was a result of Soviet design. Again, the belief that Moscow influenced all Communist regimes led Washington policymakers to interpret events with a jaundiced eye. Clearly, Mao's decision to intervene at a point when the UN forces were near total victory reflected a strong sense of obligation to support Kim Il Sung. It is also significant since it suggests that Stalin was less committed to North Korea than the West believed.

The Decline of Soviet Influence

The decline of Soviet influence in North Korea began with the withdrawal of Soviet forces from North Korea in 1948. Simultaneously, thousands of Koreans who had fought in China returned to the North. The significance of these events could not have been lost on Stalin. In 1945 Stalin had remarked, "Whoever occupies territory imposes his social system."[7] Withdrawing Soviet forces and substituting them with Chinese-linked veterans provided Kim with increased flexibility to maneuver between the two powers. In part, Stalin's actions may have been a recognition of the limits of Soviet influence in Asia. Perhaps Stalin was confident that Kim Il Sung's regime was not in danger of defeat by rival factions and therefore Kim did not require active support of the Red Army. Reflecting on the earlier Great Power conferences, Stalin's actions appear to have been consistent with his expressed desire to have a friendly North Korean buffer. More likely, Stalin may have made a conscious decision to limit his investment in favor of Eastern Europe.

George F. Kennan has argued that ideological and political control and influence were not sufficient to keep a satellite in the Soviet sphere. In his opinion, once the Soviet forces withdrew, Moscow relinquished real influence over Pyongyang.[8] Certainly the "shadow" of Soviet forces loomed across the Russo-Korean border; however, any Soviet intervention would have had to contend with a larger Korean force now that the Korean

[6] "Strategy of Mao Revealed," Kansas City Star, 1 March 1992, A22.

[7] Bruce Cumings, The Origins of the Korean War, vol. II. (Princeton University Press, 1990), 356.

[8] George F. Kennan, "Transcript of Round Table Discussion," October, 1949.

veterans had returned. There is no evidence that Stalin ever contemplated military intervention in Korea. Certainly, the political repercussions of such an act would have far outweighed the advantages of establishing complete control. The importance of Stalin's actions in Korea becomes apparent when compared with his actions in European satellites. In Eastern Europe, Stalin continued to maintain Soviet forces even after pro-Soviet regimes were in place. The fact that Stalin may have placed greater importance on Europe, which he undoubtedly did, is not the issue. Instead, the salient point is that a Soviet military presence provided Stalin the flexibility and power to influence events in European satellites. In Korea, he did not have this option.

Most likely, Stalin's actions in Korea reflected his usual caution in executing foreign policy that usually subordinated ideology to political necessity. Concerning the bilateral defense pact between Peking and Pyongyang, he probably concurred because it represented the best of both worlds: Soviet interests could be achieved in Korea, while in the event of war, the treaty would obligate the Chinese to aid the Koreans. On the Chinese side, the treaty provided the opportunity for Peking to maintain its traditional interest in her former suzerainty-state.

The Western Perception

In October 1950, the Department of State dispatched a research team to North Korea to survey the functioning of the regime prior to the outbreak of hostilities. The team focused on two major questions:

- In what manner and with what degree of success did the USSR exercise control over the North Korea regime? and,
- How effective was the internal performance of this regime as measured by its ability to promote conditions of political stability, economic growth, and military strength in the area?[9]

The study argues that the Soviet Union achieved its primary objectives: establishing a mechanism that ensured the North Korean government would be responsive to the

[9] U.S. Department of State, North Korea: A Case Study in the Techniques of Takeover. (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1951), 1.

USSR, and creating the conditions whereby the North Korean government could perpetuate itself and exploit any opportunities in the area. According to the report, the Soviets successfully imposed their own brand of imperialism on North Korea through three major fields of activity– economic, cultural, and military.[10]

The State report suggests that the Soviets adopted economic policies practiced by the Japanese during their occupation prior to 1945. Under Soviet pressure, the North Korean economy focused on mining and heavy industry– the major sources of exports to the USSR– while minimizing investments in domestic manufactures. Chemical fertilizers were exported to Russia at the expense of North Korean requirements. In addition, the Soviets allegedly controlled Pyongyang's foreign trade by monopolizing it for their own purposes.[11]

Culturally, Soviet policies mirrored Japanese policy. Koreans were compelled to learn the Russian language; Soviet ideology, scientific, and literature became standard texts in North Korea; and Soviet art forms, e.g., movies, plays, and dances, inundated the country. Finally, the training and indoctrination of North Koreans in the USSR reinforced the "Russification" of North Korea. According to the report, the success of the Soviets was due to Moscow's ability to identify with the interests of the North Koreans, i.e., unification of Korea and expulsion of foreign, i.e., American occupation forces.[12]

In the view of the report, the Soviet military advisers ensured the reliability of the North Korean armed forces thus guaranteeing the permanence of the Kim regime. By placing advisers in key positions and establishing North Korean dependency on Soviet arms and equipment, Moscow was able to use the armed forces to serve its own ends. Of even greater importance to Soviet objectives was the North Korean Army's offensive orientation. This focus gave North Korea the ability to influence the situation in the area– a stated objective of the USSR.[13]

The State Department discounted the existence of strong Sino-North Korean rela-

[10] Ibid., 2.

[11] Ibid., 4.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid., 5.

tions prior to the Korean War. The basis of this assessment was the existence of border disputes between the two countries. Although the report acknowledges the insignificance of these clashes, it claims that these disputes undermined efforts to improve relations between the countries. The report does not acknowledge the existence of the Sino-North Korean bilateral defense pact nor does it speculate on the reason for Chinese intervention on behalf of Pyongyang in November 1950. Persumably, State refused to accept the authenticity of the Chinese Nationalists' reports of the pact. Concerning the intervention of the Chinese, State probably attributed Peking's involvement to Moscow's direction.

The report makes two observations that should have caused the authors to reassess their conclusions. First, the report acknowledges the lack of any documentary evidence that substantiates the belief that Moscow directed North Korea to invade the South. Nevertheless, the report suggests that Soviet control and influence over North Korea was so all-encompassing that, "the decision to attack South Korea could never have been taken without Soviet approval if not inspiration."[14] Second, the report concurs with Kennan's theory that Soviet influence diminished once the Kremlin withdrew its occupation forces. Given the fact that the report assigned such importance to the presence of the Soviet military, how could the Soviets exercise such control in the absence of the armed forces? Admittedly, Soviet approval would influence Kim; however, influence is not synonomous with the absolute control suggested by the State report.

The biased nature of the report is readily apparent to the informed reader. The stated objectives of the report reflect a presumption of Soviet influence that prejudices the survey. In addition, the report fails to identify the authors of the report or their credentials, to identify the North Korean officials who provided the information, or to explain the methods employed to corroborate the evidence. This should not come as a surprise given the prevailing opinion of the West at the time of the report– that the Soviet Union was responsible for the outbreak of the Korean War. It is certainly questionable, given Secretary of State Acheson's perception of Soviet involvement, how the Department of State could have conducted an objective study of such an ideologically-charged issue in the midst of the

[14] Ibid.

war.

What the Soviets Lost

The previous discussion and analysis has illustrated how the West consistently interpreted Soviet foreign policy actions in the context of pursuing Communist goals. By the Spring of 1950, the Truman Administration had become convinced that the Soviet Union was committed to an expansionist policy that would confront the West wherever the opportunity arose. Truman had responded with the Truman Doctrine. In April 1950, the NSC had recommended he adopt NSC-68. Truman agreed completely with the arguments presented in NSC-68, however, he also recognized the problem of implementing the recommendations. Congress continued to be budget-conscious and the American public remained unconvinced of the impending threat despite a vigorous anti-Communist campaign by the Administration. For this reason, Truman could not be confident of easy passage of legislation that placed a burden on the public in order to implement the massive rearmament program envisioned in NSC-68. In sharp contrast, the Republicans in Congress were intensifying their attacks on the Administration for losing China. Finally, the hysteria of McCarthyism continued to subject Truman's foreign policy to close scrutiny.

Without question, the leaders in the Kremlin were aware of the dynamics of American politics and European dissatisfaction with the Truman Doctrine. Even in the absence of documentary evidence, it is logical to assume that the Soviet Union recognized that with each passing day they grew stronger as long as America failed to rearm. Under these circumstances it was decidedly in Moscow's favor to act in such a manner as not to arouse the American public thereby upsetting the current rearming-rate ratio. The Greece-Turkey aid program, the Marshall Plan, the North Atlantic T. .ty Organization (NATO), and NSC-68 (although classified) were all tangible proof of the gradual shift in opinion towards the Soviet Union. The Kremlin understood the consequences of instigating an attack on South Korea.

At this point in the Cold War, there were nations that remained neutral in the East-West struggle. The invasion of South Korea caused an ideological shift in favor of the

West. The impact of this realignment remains conjecture; however, at a minimum it created an additional obstacle for Soviet foreign policy. Assuming that the Soviets would have anticipated such a reaction to the invasion, it is questionable if they would have accepted the political "fallout." Subsequent events in Europe, e.g., Hungary in 1956, Czechoslavakia in 1968, and Afghanistan in 1979, would reveal that the Soviets were willing to accept such repercussions when they viewed to be in their interests. In Moscow's opinion, Korea did ot warrant such risks.

The most often cited reason to support the position that the Soviet Union was not responsible for the North Korean attack is the recognition of Communist China's delegates by the United Nations. Peking had gone to great lengths to avoid provoking other nations in an attempt to gain support for its admission into the UN. To this end, China had gained the support of several non-Communist government such as the United Kingdom and India. In addition, America had gone on record as indicating that, though she would not vote in favor of China's admission, she would not veto such admission either. It appeared that China's admission to the UN was a matter of time. At the time of the North Korean invasion, the Soviet delegate to the UN, Ambassador Malik, was not present having boycotted the UN Security Council meetings in protest over the refusal to admit Red China. If the Soviet Union was determined to gain the admission of China, it would have been in Moscow's interest to prevent such an invasion given the current tension resulting from the East-West struggle.[15]

What was Moscow's Goal?

The aforementioned disadvantages argue convincingly why the Soviet Union would not have instigated the Korean War. Accepting these arguments, the obvious question is what was Moscow's goal? In the context of Soviet involvement, historians have offered several explanations for the invasion. Among the more popular explanations are that

[16] William Stueck offers the proposition that the Soviet Union boycotted the UN to prevent Red China's admission rather than facilitate it. He suggests that the Kremlin recognized time was running out and Peking would eventually gain admission thereby achieving an equal status with the USSR in an international forum. The boycott was a technique that would gain the moral high ground within the Communist world while continuing to relegate China to a subordinate status.

the invasion was a diversion designed to wear down the United States economically and militarily to a point where the Soviet Union could initiate an attack on Europe or that the attack was to unify Korea under a Communist regime thus bringing the Korean peninsula within the Soviet realm. Because the Western perception of Soviet complicity in the Korean War rests on these theories, each explanation warrants a brief analysis.

The attrition theory, that is, the clever wearing down of the economic and military resources of the United States proceeds from the premise that the Soviet Union assumed the United States would become involved in the conflict. This argument has several flaws that contradict this theory. First, the United States, in the period immediately prior to the outbreak of hostilities, had indicated that Korea was outside America's sphere of interest (Acheson's famous Press Club speech). Second, the previous discussion highlighted the fact that it was in Moscow's interest not to provoke the West since it would undoubtedly lead to a unfavorable rearm-rate ratio. If Moscow assumed the US would intervene in the conflict why would the Kremlin instigate the invasion? To do so would conflict with the overriding policy goal of achieving military superiority. Finally, it is questionable whether Soviet planners believed they could wear down the United States. During WWII, Moscow had witnessed firsthand the enormous industrial capacity of the United States. Accepting the attrition theory raises the question of what had changed in America that would prevent her from achieving a similar level of mobilization in response to the Communist threat? Thus, the attrition argument does not pass the basic logic test– that it was in the strategic interests of the Soviet Union to instigate the North Korean invasion of the South.[16]

Closely related to the attrition theory is the belief that at some point in time when America's resources had reached a critical level the Soviet Union would launch a surprise attack in Europe. This belief is a result of the Western practice of interpreting Soviet actions in ideological terms. In this case, there was no evidence of Soviet plans to initiate such an attack in Europe. Such an attack would have required extensive forward-positioning and stockpiling of supplies, formations, and equipment. The Red Army could not have conducted such preliminary activities in Europe without the West detecting them. This is

[16] Wilbur W. Hitchcock, "North Korea Jumps the Gun," Current History 20 (January 1951): 138-139.

evident in view of the fact that Washington knew of the Moscow's arming of North Korea in the months just prior to the invasion. The failure was one of interpretation not detection.

Even the State Department had reservations about the rationale for this theory. On June 30, 1950, Acheson met with Wilhelm Morgenstierne, Ambassador of Norway to discuss the Korean crisis. During the course of the conversation, the Ambassador expressed the view that the invasion of South Korea was merely a feint and that the Soviets might attack in Europe. He was especially concerned about the possibility of the Soviet Union attacking Norway. Acheson acknowledged the Ambassador's concerns and explained that while there were some Soviet troop movements in several places, Washington did not consider them significant.[17]

The second theory focuses on the conquest of South Korea. The JCS recognized the military significance of a Soviet-dominated Korean peninsula. In their opinion, such a situation would threaten Japan and consequently American lines of communication in the Pacific. Communist control of Korea combined with the Soviet occupation of Sakhalin Island would have placed the USSR in a position to dominate the entire Sea of Japan. In response, the US would have been forced to forego the Japanese peace treaty; to consolidate Western military bases in Japan thus denying the Japanese sovereignty; and to consider rearming the Japanese. In the event that the West followed this course of action, the Soviets could turn the situation into propaganda by encouraging the Japanese to evict the Western imperialists.

If we accept the proposition that the Soviet goal was to gain control over South Korea, it follows that Moscow would have made certain preparations to enhance their chances of success. First, the Kremlin should have directed Malik to return to the UN as a precautionary measure to block any UN moves to intervene in the conflict. Critics will argue that Moscow did not believe that the UN or the US would intervene and therefore this measure was not necessary. While this argument may have merit, it fails to appreciate the importance of anticipating all possible reactions to the invasion. The Soviet planners were not inept or uninformed. The fact that Malik was not present at the time of the inva-

[17] Department of State, Memorandum of Conversation between the Secretary of State and Ambassador of Norway, June 30, 1950, Box 65, Department of State File, Truman Papers.

sion suggests that Moscow was surprised. Stalin was not so naive as to think that merely remaining absent from the UN would convince the world that the Soviet Union was not involved in the attack. Furthermore, if we accept William Stueck's theory that the Soviets were actually trying to block Red China's admission to the UN rather than secure Peking's seating, the invasion upset these plans since Malik returned to limit UN action in the Security Council. Of course international opinion towards China had changed and there was no real threat that the Chinese would gain membership in the UN at this juncture. We can assume that the Soviets recognized the opportunity to return to the UN and obstruct US efforts to intervene in Korea without being forced to support China's admission in the UN.

Second, Stalin's failure to support the Chinese intervention in October 1950, undermines the argument that the Soviet goal was consolidation of control on the peninsula. If Stalin was determined to establish control over Korea he should have honored Mao's request for support. As we have seen, the Sino-North Korea bilateral defense pact provided Moscow with the best of both worlds. Mao was willing to meet his obligations under the pact, however, he needed Soviet air support for his forces. Assuming Kim Il Sung would defeat the South, the result would be a unified Korea subject, to a lesser degree, to Soviet influence. At a minimum, Pyongyang would continue to be a friendly regime. If Moscow's foreign policy was determined by Communist ideology as the West believed, Stalin should have provided the support. In truth, ideology did not determine Soviet foreign policy. Instead, national security interests shaped by Russian insecurity determined Soviet actions.

What the Evidence Reveals

The purpose of the preceding discussion has been to argue that there is insufficient evidence to claim that North Korea was a Soviet satellite subject to Moscow's direction. This does not suggest that the Soviet Union was not aware of the impending invasion. To the contrary, the evidence reveals clearly that Stalin met several times with Mao and Kim to discuss the proposed invasion.

In his memoirs, Khrushchev recalls the historic meeting between Stalin and Kim Il

Sung in December 1949. Khruschev explains that Kim approached Stalin with the idea of provoking South Korea into a confrontation. Although Stalin had doubts about the prospects for success, he found himself obligated to support the idea from ideological standpoint. Stalin viewed the issue as an internal struggle among the Korean people. He was primarily concerned about the possibility of the United States intervening on Rhee's behalf, however, when Kim assured him that the victory would be swift thus avoiding American intervention Stalin agreed to support the idea.[18]

More germane to this study, however, is Khrushchev's recollection of the origin of the idea. On this point he is very clear. He remembers that, "I must stress that the war wasn't Stalin's idea, but Kim Il Sung's. *Kim was the initiator.* [italics added][19] Critics have questioned the authenticity of Khrushchev's memoirs and suggested that they have been altered to conceal Soviet complicity in the Korean War. This viewpoint attempts to discredit the source because it fails to support the Western view. Furthermore, critics refuse to acknowledge corroborating evidence from other primary sources. Li San Cho, former North Korean ambassador to Mocow, claims that Kim instigated a border incident to justify the invasion of South Korea. He confirms Khrushchev's claim that Kim was responsible for the attack. In an interview with the Moscow News, Cho explained that, "There were consultations with Stalin but the initiative came from Kim Il Sung."[20]

The role of the Soviet military in planning the invasion has always been cited as evidence that Moscow initiated the attack. New information suggests that the role of Soviet advisers was not unlike that of any other great power supporting a friendly regime– to provide advice and assistance. In Seoul, Korea, the "Conference on the Soviet Role in the Korean War" convened in November 1991 and assembled Soviet, American, and Korean experts on this issue. One member of the Soviet delegation attempted to describe the probable situation in 1950 by explaining that general staffs routinely develop war plans. Accordingly, Korean staff officers, because of their limited experience, would undoubtedly have requested assistance from Soviet advisers. The Soviet adviser, he explained, "would

[18] Nikita Khrushchev, Khrushchev Remembers., trans. Strobe Talbott, ed. Edward Crankshaw. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1970), 367-368.

[19] Ibid., 368.

[20] "North Korean Exile Says Kim Staged Incident in 1950 War." New York Times, 6 July 1990.

have been guilty of dereliction of duty had he not provided such help."[21]

Finally, there is evidence that Washington was not convinced that the Soviet Union had initiated the attack. On June 26, 1950, Secretary of State Acheson provided Senator Wiley a report on the current situation in Korea. During the course of the conversation, Senator Wiley asked whether there was evidence that the Russians were actually participating in the conflict. Acheson responded that it appeared that only the North Koreans were involved in the fighting, "although, of course, there was a strong *suspicion* [italics added] that it had been stimulated by the Russians."[22]

The evidence suggests that the Soviet Union was not responsible for proposing the concept or actively encouraging Kim Il Sung to attack the South. Nevertheless, certain circles in the West cling to this opinion and discount evidence to the contrary. In view of this information, the obvious question is why did the West take this position in 1950?

[21] Roger Dingman and Ronald M. Bonesteel, "The Soviet Role in the Korean War," Combat Studies Institute, US Army Command & General Staff College, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, 1991.

[22] Department of State, Memorandum of Conversation between Secretary of State and Senator Wiley, June 26, 1950, Box 65, Department of State File, Truman Papers.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

It is not difficult to explain why postwar events led Western leaders to view the Soviet Union with such hostility and distrust to the point that they (the West) believed Moscow was responsible for the outbreak of the Korean War. Certainly there existed, in the postwar period, a history of confrontations and encounters that served as the basis for distrust. However, these events, when examined in detail, do not support the view that the Soviet Union had embarked on a campaign of aggression in pursuit of Communist ideals. Furthermore, although the Soviet Union was aware of the plan to invade South Korea, the evidence suggests that it was Kim Il Sung's idea rather than a Soviet initiative. Accordingly, the explanation for the Western view of the Soviet Union's role in the Korean War is found in three critical areas: perceptions of history, ideology, and personality.

Historical Perceptions

Without question, the divergent historical experiences of the West, particularly the United States, and the Soviet Union determined their views on how to achieve security in the postwar era. Understandably, the Russians viewed security in terms of space– not a surprising viewpoint, considering the frequency with which their country had been invaded and how distance had been used to defeat their enemies (Napoleon and Hitler for example). The implications of nuclear weapons and long-range bombers on this attitude may have been lost on Stalin; the defeat of Hitler did not alter Stalin's desire to control as much territory as possible along the Soviet periphery. Milovan Djilas observed that, "He regarded as sure only whatever he held in his fist." "Everything beyond the control of his police was a

potential enemy."[212]

Conversely, Americans tended to view security in institutional terms. In their opinion, security depended on establishing representative governments everywhere, together with a collective security organization capable of resolving disputes among nations. FDR's strong support for the United Nations and trusteeships, especially a Korean trusteeship, was the most vivid example of America's attitude. Unfortunately, Washington overlooked the fact that governments might not always pursue peaceful coexistence with their neighbors or that the United Nations, in the absence of great power agreement, would possess the means to resolve disputes. The Korean War was the first instance where this absence of great power agreement prevented a quick resolution to the dispute. In addition, the issue of China's admission to the UN further complicated the situation.

There was, of course, flexibility for compromising these divergent viewpoints. Actually, neither the United States nor Great Britain had been willing to abandon its spheres of influence as a means of achieving their postwar security. Both nations accepted the legitimate right of the USSR to secure its borders with friendly countries. Undoubtedly, the Soviets took advantage of this view. As we have seen, Moscow's actions in Iran illustrate how the Soviet Union could interpret the Western position to serve the Kremlin's interest. The disagreement appears to have been not over the right to establish influence, but the method of achieving this influence. The Western view was that it should occur as a result of self determination. The Soviets, however, often gained influence by denying the people self determination. Given the Western belief that only the proliferation of democratic institutions could ensure peace, Soviet means of establishing security caused apprehension regardless of their motives. To his dismay, Stalin found that when he implemented his vision of security he inevitably came into conflict with the Western view.

John L. Gaddis suggests that the failure of the West and the Soviets to reach a compromise on security interests was due, in part, to America's unique approaches to the problem. One viewpoint, which he calls "universalism," attempted to achieve security through homogeneity. By working to make the world resemble the United States as much

[212] Milovan Djilas, Conversations with Stalin. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962), 82.

as possible, the world will be less threatening thereby enhancing security. The other viewpoint, which he labels "particularism," argued that what is important is that the world does not threaten the United States regardless of whether it resembles America or not. Whereas the "universalist" sought to achieve harmony in international affairs, the "particularist" adopted a more realistic approach by recognizing that homogeneity is unlikely and therefore nations could achieve security only through a balancing of power, interests, and antagonisms.[213] Clearly, the Truman Administration committed the nation to the "universalist" approach in dealing with the Soviets. In Korea, America had attempted to mold the Rhee government in the image of an American democracy. In Washington's opinion, establishing a democracy in the South would thwart Moscow's attempt to exert control over the entire peninsula.

Voices of reason within the Truman Administration, most notably George F. Kennan, argued for the adoption of the "particularist" approach in dealing with the Soviet Union. In 1946, Kennan suggested that any attempt to seek security through uniformity would quickly exhaust our limited resources. In addition, attempting to impose our form of government on the rest of the world would compromise American ideals by forcing us to adopt the means of our adversary.[214] Rather than attempt to mold the world in the American image, the main task of containment should be to prevent the remaining regions of the world that possessed military strength– the United Kingdom, the Rhine valley and adjacent industrial areas, and Japan– from succumbing to Communist control. Soviet hostility towards the West, Kennan argued, stemmed from a deep-seated sense of insecurity on the part of the Kremlin leaders. As a result of historical experience Russians had never enjoyed a luxury taken for granted by Americans– free security.[215]

---

[213] John L. Gaddis, Containment: Documents on American Policy and Strategy, 1945-1950. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 26-27.

[214] Kennan to James F. Byrnes, February 22, 1946. "Foreign Relations of the United States: 1946," VI, 709 (Document 3).

[215] John L. Gaddis, Containment: Documents on American Policy and Strategy, 1945-1950. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 26.

The Influence of Ideology

Ideological differences between the Soviet Union and the West contributed to the misinterpretation of Moscow's role as the instigator of the Korean War. During World War II, Stalin had downplayed the Soviet commitment to communism to the point of dissolving the Comintern in 1943. Many Americans came to believe that any nation that fought the Germans could not be all bad. Following the war, Soviet influence over Eastern Europe raised concerns within the Western camp. The West began to believe that the Kremlin had only sided with the allies to defeat Hitler and that, having achieved victory, Moscow was now embarking on a campaign of aggression.

This was a misperception. Stalin had always viewed national security as the paramount goal of Soviet foreign policy. International communism was secondary; it was security along the borders that had motivated him to expand Soviet control in Eastern Europe. Rather than encourage Communists outside the Soviet Union he normally advised restraint, especially in the case of Greece, France, Italy, and China. Again, the West failed to understand the fundamental motivation for Soviet foreign policy. Recalling the past consequences when a dictator's rhetoric was not taken seriously, leaders in the United States and Europe jumped to the conclusion that Stalin, like Hitler, had grand designs for expanding his control over Europe.

In truth, Communist ideology served as justification for actions rather than the reason for them. Although Stalin's insecurity might persuade him to pursue world domination, it would be in response to this sense of insecurity rather than a desire to establish an international classless society molded along Communist lines. In this regard, it followed that the West should have focused their attention and efforts on containing Soviet expansionism rather than communism unless it proved to be an instrument of expansionism. Instead, the West became preoccupied with the ideology rather than reality. Kennan recalls that, "It had been the shadow, rather than the substance, of danger which we had been concerned to dispel."[216]

[216] George F. Kennan, Memoirs: 1925-1950. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1967), 351.

The Cult of Personality

Finally, an accident of personalities made it difficult for the West to make an accurate determination of Soviet involvement in the Korean War. Under Roosevelt, American-Soviet relations had been amiable and characterized by a spirit of compromise on the part of both leaders. In Truman, the Soviets sensed an abrupt shift from cooperation to confrontation. Khrushchev observed that whereas Roosevelt's policy of mutually, beneficial cooperation had been instrumental in the successes during World War II, Truman's uncompromising, recalcitrant approach signaled a total renunciation of this policy.[217] Supporters of Truman contend that only his style was different: where Roosevelt had sought to gain Stalin's support on important issues by compromising on lesser topics, Truman attempted to deal from a position of strength. This argument fails to acknowledge the true nature of Truman's opinion of the Soviet Union. On April 20, 1950, Secretary General of the United Nations, Trygve Lie, met with Truman to discuss current Cold War issues. Mr. Lie expressed the opinion that Stalin was misinformed about American foreign policy and that a meeting with Truman would be of great help in correcting any misconceptions. Mr. Lie felt that a meeting between the two super powers could defuse growing tensions over issues such as China's admission to the UN. Truman responded that he had met with Stalin in Potsdam in 1945 and had done so with every intention of working out problems. Unfortunately, he had been disillusioned on the usefulness of such meetings. He went on to say that on numerous occasions he had been willing to invite Stalin to Washington as he had any other Chief of State, but "he was not going anywhere else to meet him."[218] Clearly, the tone of this discussion reveals Truman's contempt for Stalin and the Soviet Union. The significance of this conversation is that it reveals Truman's lack of faith in a diplomatic solution to Cold War problems. Truman had become convinced, by his own admission, that he could not work with the Soviets. Given the fact that he only met with Stalin once, we must assume that his opinions and beliefs concerning Soviet behavior were

[217] Nikita Khrushchev, Khrushchev Remembers., trans. Strobe Talbott, ed. Edward Crankshaw. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1970), 232.

[218] Dean Acheson, Secretary of State. Memorandum of Conversation between Secretary General Trygve Lie and President Truman, April 20, 1950. Papers of Dean Acheson, Box 65, Truman Papers.

based on preconceived notions of Communist ideology and Soviet expansionism– all of which were misinterpretations.

What Truman failed to consider, however, was the possibility that Stalin might be bluffing. Certainly, there were recent examples to support this theory. In Iran, Greece, and Berlin, Stalin backed down when the United States confronted him. Given America's role in attempting to crush Bolshevism, the Soviet Union's economic and strategic inferiority vis-a-vis the United States, and the devastating effects of the atomic bomb at Hiroshima, Stalin may have feared the West as much as the West feared him. Like Truman, he may have felt that showing any sign of weakness would be detrimental to the Soviet Union. Because both leaders had learned the lessons of the 1930's; that appeasement never pays, resolution of differences were impossible and misinterpretation of actions inevitable.

Epilogue

The exact role of the Soviet Union in the outbreak of the Korean War remains a mystery. This study has not attempted to answer this question. Contrary to the Western belief, the available evidence does not allow scholars to deduce that the Soviet Union was responsible for proposing the concept and encouraging North Korea to invade the South. In fact, recent evidence such as the publication of Mao's papers and the testimony of a former North Korean diplomat support the theory that the Soviet Union was involved in the planning, but the idea to invade South Korea was Kim Il Sung's initiative.

The analysis of this question has illustrated the subjective nature of foreign policy. Certainly, this is not a revelation, however, its importance in formulating policy is often overlooked. In this context, it is the personality of the leader and his perception of the world that determines policy. Perhaps Carl Becker's theory that political events often result from a "climate of opinion" is applicable in this instance. Certainly, events during the period between 1945 and 1950 created an attitude towards the Soviet Union that influenced Western opinion towards Moscow's actions. The salient point, however, is that leaders could have prevented this "climate of opinion" had they listened to the dissenting views of

their subordinates. Unfortunately, the attitudes took on a life of their own and became entrenched. What is clear is that several factors– historical perceptions, ideological differences, and the cult of personalities– influenced Western leaders to such a degree that they became convinced the Soviets were responsible for proposing and encouraging the North Koreans to attack the South. In truth, the West had come to this opinion before the attack of June 25, 1950. It was several factors– all of which could have been avoided.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Official Sources

Foreign Relations of the United States. Diplomatic Papers (1946): The Conference of Berlin, VI.

Truman, Harry S. Library. Presidential Secretary's File. Selected Records Relating to the Korean War. Office of Intelligence Research File.

U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. Implementation of Soviet Objectives in Korea. ORE 62, 18 November 1947.

_____. Prospects for the Survival of the Republic of Korea. ORE 44-48, 28 October 1948.

_____. Consequences of US Troop Withdrawal from Korea in Spring, 1949. ORE 3-49, 28 February, 1949.

National Security Council. A report to the President on The Position of the United States with Respect to Asia. Washington, D.C., 30 December 1949.

_____. Progress Report by the Under Secretary of State on The Position of the United States with Respect to Asia (NSC 48/2). Washington, D.C., 27 February 1950.

U.S. Department of State. North Korea: A Case Study in the Techniques of Take-over. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961.

Books

Ambrose, Stephen E. Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy since 1938. London: Penguin Press, 1971.

Bohlen, Charles E. Witness to History 1929-1969. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1973.

Boll, Michael M. National Security Planning. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1988.

Buhite, Russell D. Soviet-American Relations in Asia, 1945-1954. University of Oklahoma Press, 1981.

Clemens, Diane S. Yalta. New York: Oxford University Press, 1970.

Cohen, Stephen F. Rethinking the Soviet Experience. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.

Cumings, Bruce. The Origins of the Korean War. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981, vol. I.

_____. The Origins of the Korean War. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990, vol. II.

Dean, Jonathan. Watershed in Europe. Toronto: Lexington Books, 1987.

Djilas, Milovan. Conversations with Stalin. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962.

Encyclopedia Britannica, 15th ed., S.v. "Korea."

Fleming, D.F. The Cold War and Its Origins, vol.II. Garden City, New York.: Doubleday, 1961.

Freeland, Richard M. The Truman Doctrine and the Origins of McCarthyism. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972.

Gaddis, John Lewis. The United States and the Origins of the Cold War,1941-1947. New York: Columbia University Press, 1972.

_____. Containment; Documents on American Foreign Policy and Strategy, 1945-1950. New York: Columbia University Press, 1978.

_____. Russia, the Soviet Union, and the United States. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1978.

Gromyko, Andrei. Memoirs. New York: Doubleday, 1989.

Herken, Gregg. The Winning Weapon. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981.

Kaufman, Burton, I. The Korean War; Challenges in Crisis, Credibility, and Command. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986.

Kennan, George F. Memoirs, 1925-1950. New York: Pantheon Books, 1967.

_____. Memoirs, 1950-1967. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1972.

Kolko, Joyce, and Gabriel Kolko. The Limits of Power: The World and U.S. Foreign Policy, 1945-1954. New York: Harper and Row, 1972.

Khrushchev, Nikita. Khrushchev Remembers, trans. Strobe Talbott. Boston: Little, Brown, 1970.

LaFeber, Walter. America, Russia and the Cold War 1945-1984. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1963.

Lippmann, Walter. The Cold War: A Study in U.S. Foreign Policy. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947.

Lowe, Peter. The Origins of the Korean War. New York: Longman, 1986.

McNeal, Robert H. Stalin: Man and Ruler. New York: New York University Press, 1988.

Paige, Glenn. The Korean Decision. Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1968.

Paterson, Thomas G., ed. Cold War Critics: Alternatives to American Foreign Policy in the Truman Years. Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971.

_____. ed. Containment and the Cold War. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1973.

_____. Meeting the Communist Threat. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Simmons, Robert R. The Strained Alliance: Peking, Pyongyang, and Moscow and the Politics of the Korean War. New York: The Free Press, 1975.

Spanier, John. American Foreign Policy Since World War II. Washington: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1991.

Stueck, William. The Road to Confrontation. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983.

_____. The Wedemeyer Mission. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984.

Taubman, William. Stalin's American Policy. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1982.

Truman, Harry S. Memoris by Harry S. Truman. New York: Doubleday, 1956.

Ulam, Adam B. Expansion and Coexistence. New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1968.

Warth, Robert D. Soviet Russia in World Politics. New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1963.

Westwood, J. N. Russia Against Japan, 1904-1905: A New Look at the Russo-Japanese War. New York: State University of New York Press, 1986.

Wheeler-Bennett, John W. and Nicholls, Anthony. The Semblance of Peace: the Political Settlement after the Second World War. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1972.

Articles and Journals

Bonesteel, Ronald M. and Dingman, Roger. "The Soviet Role in the Korean War." US Army Command and General Staff College. Ft Leavenworth, KS, 1991.

Hitchcock, Wilbur W.. "North Korea Jumps the Gun." Current History, XX (March 1951), 136-144.

Stueck, William. "The Soviet Union and the Origins of the Korean War." World Politics, XXVIII (October 1975-July 1976), 622-635.

Swartout, Robert. "American Historians and the Outbreak of the Korean War." Asian Quarterly, 1979, 65-77.

INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST

1. Combined Arms Research Library
   U.S. Army Command and General Staff College
   Fort Leavenworth, Kansas 66027-6900

2. Defense Technical Information Center
   Cameron Station
   Alexandria, Virginia 22314

3. LTC Walton D. Stallings
   Center for Army Leadership
   USACGSC
   Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-6900

4. Dr. Robert F. Baumann
   Combat Studies Institute
   USACGSC
   Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-6900

5. Dr. Paul Kozar
   The Graduate School
   Georgetown University
   37th & O Streets, NW
   Washington, D.C. 20057